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ROTUNDA

the magazine of the Royal Ontario Museum

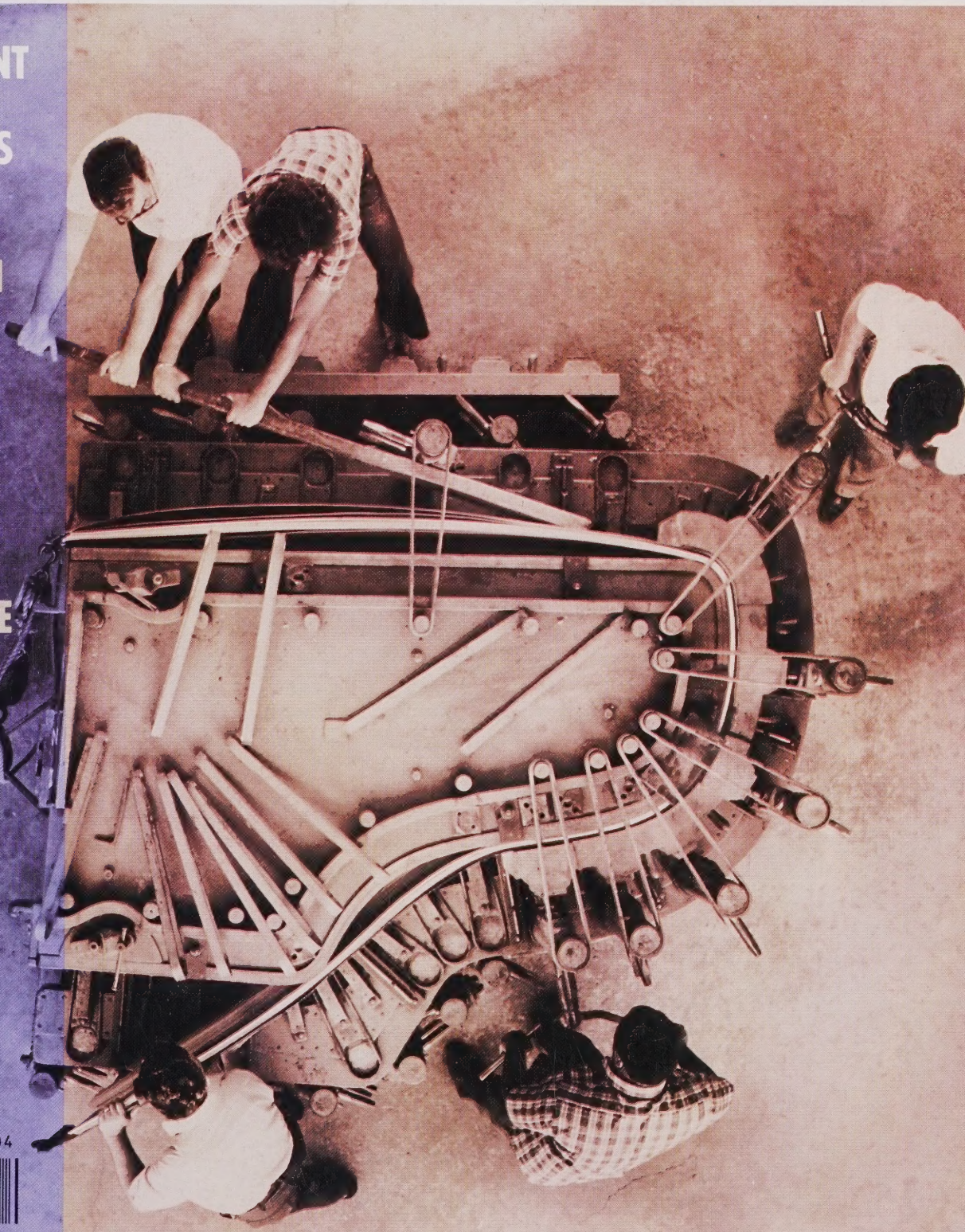
INSTRUMENT OF THE IMMORTALS

IS MODERN FASHION MODERN?

TEXTILES OF FEZ

THE FRAGRANCE OF KINGS

YUCATAN'S SPECIAL MAMMALS



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ROTUNDA

the magazine of the Royal Ontario Museum

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COVER
Workers using careful but brute strength and a winch force the wooden rim to conform to the shape of a Steinway grand piano. Turn to page 30 for the story behind the greatest pianos.
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Published quarterly by the Royal Ontario Museum
© The Royal Ontario Museum, 1991 Printed and bound in Canada
Indexed in the *Canadian Periodical Index*
Indexed in the *Canadian Magazine Index* and available on-line in the *Canadian Business & Current Affairs Database*
ISSN 0035-8495
Second class mail registration number 1531

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND SINGLE COPY SALES

Subscriptions $16.95 (4 issues) plus 7% GST,
outside Canada add $4.00 for postage and handling; single copies $4.25 plus 7% GST
All circulation and subscription inquiries should be addressed to *Rotunda,*
35 Riviera Drive, Unit 17, Markham, Ontario, L3R 8N4, (416) 946-0406

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Editor's Note

"Instrument of the Immortals." What else could you call the piano that has been chosen above all others by the world's greatest performers? After working with Cynthia Dann-Beardsley on this issue's cover story about Steinway pianos, and after speaking to musicians and others involved in the music world, I am beginning to wonder if the thousand and more greatest pianists —Anton and Artur Rubinstein, Josef Hofmann, Vladimir Horowitz, and Claudio Arrau to name a few —reached their immortal status with the divine assistance of their Steinway pianos. In fact while attending a recent piano recital I found myself more entranced by the Steinway than by the pianist. It is fascinating to learn about the complex process of manufacture and the meticulous workmanship that are still the marks of a Steinway, and it is heartening to know that Steinway & Sons can survive the enormous competition of mass-produced, high-quality Asian products.

Superb craftsmanship has kept the handmade textile industry alive in Fez, Morocco, for fifteen hundred years. Drawlooms, however, which were invented about a thousand years before the printing press and were once considered as important an invention, are now almost extinct. After many centuries they are being replaced by automated looms, which rapidly weave fabric of similar quality. Louise Mackie of the ROM has had the foresight to record on videotape craftsmen working the drawlooms as well as skilled embroiderers creating decorated goods. As she explains in her article, the documentation of threatened traditional practices is as important to us and future generations as the collection and study of artifacts.

While the traditions behind Steinway and Fez textiles result in craftsmanship at its most vital, much modern dress can be seen as nothing more than a stale rerun of the 1960s according to fashion writer David Livingstone. What fashion is truly modern? Will we ever emotionally enter the twenty-first century, and will we do so fully clothed? Livingstone explores these questions and more in his entertaining look at fashion in the late twentieth century.

Throughout the course of hundreds of years the orchid has become important to all aspects of Chinese culture, from philosophy to literature, art, and medicine. Catherine Pagani looks at how these delicate and beautiful flowers with the "fragrance of kings"—in the words of Confucius—evolved into such strong and prominent symbols that even today many Chinese people have the word for orchid incorporated into their names.

Turning away from cultural traditions and icons, ROM biologist Mark Engstrom offers a glimpse at the mammalian nightlife on the Yucatán Peninsula. By studying the physical and genetic characteristics of these animals, scientists are finding that the fauna reflects the historical changes in climate, vegetation, and geology of the peninsula. Such evidence offers important support to the conservation efforts.

Once again we have reached that time of year when we reflect upon the preservation of those things that are important to us. Pride in the enriching qualities of our cultures and the preservation of the environment should be important items on everyone's lists.

Sandra Shaul

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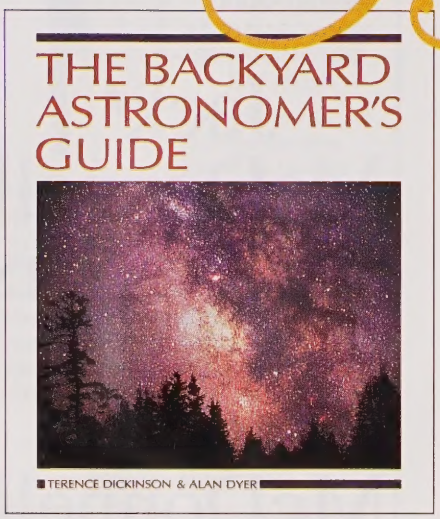

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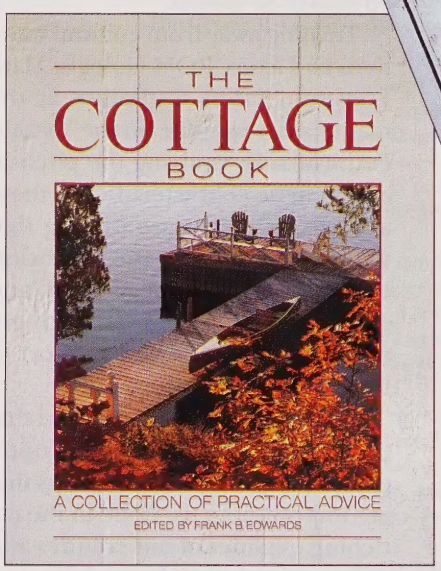

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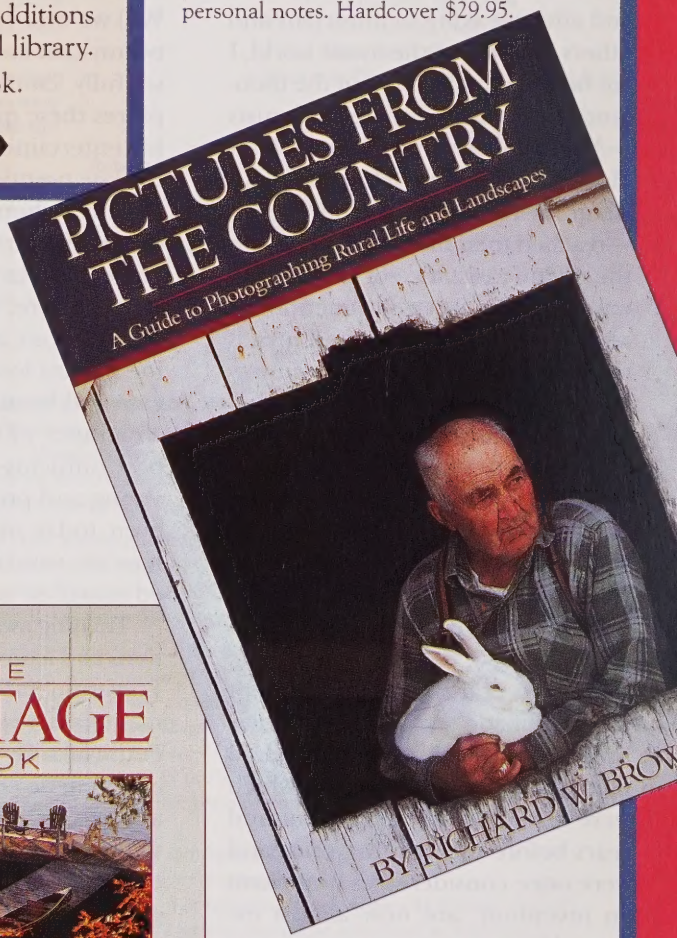

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Growing Collections

An oval dish, once part of the "Horatia Service," was recently acquired by the Museum's European Department.

A dish commissioned by Admiral Nelson acquired by ROM

The fine porcelains produced in England, c. 1800-1825, have long been admired by Canadian collectors. Recently an example of extreme historical importance was donated to the European Department. On 26 August 1802 Admiral Horatio Nelson visited the Chamberlain's Works in Worcester, where he ordered a combined tea and breakfast service. Popularly known as the "Horatia Service," it is now represented in the Royal Ontario Museum's collections because of the generosity of Miss Marian D. Rooke.

During the early 1800s the Chamberlain's factory supplied the nobility and the gentry with high-quality porcelain, often painted with elaborate patterns. The Horatia Service is painted in what would have been called an "old Japan" pattern, inspired by traditional Japanese Imari porcelain, c. 1700, with its blue underglaze and its rich overglaze of iron red, gold, and light green. As a special order the border reserves and central panels of the service were decorated with coronets, arms, and insignia appropriate to Nelson's rank. The cost of painting the 150 ducal coronets was a shilling apiece for a total of £7 10s.—a considerable sum given that the price of an entire dinner service of Wedgwood creamware was one-half to two-thirds that price, complete with crate. Because of the extensive decoration and number of pieces, the service was not completed and invoiced until January 1806, well after Nelson's death at Trafalgar on 21 October 1805.

Nelson's daughter Horatia became the owner of the service and later generations acquired individual pieces as treasured souvenirs. A significant number of pieces are displayed in the National Maritime

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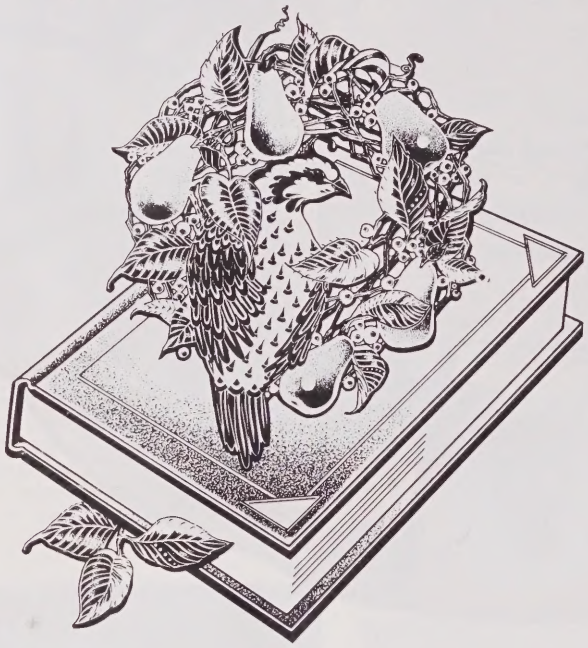

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Museum in Greenwich, England. The service was so celebrated that hard-paste porcelain reproductions were made in France.

The oval dish donated by Miss Rooke had been purchased in the 1930s from the Antiques Department of Eaton's College Street store in Toronto. On the back it bears the pattern number "240" and an incised "10"; it is probably one of the "4 dishes, 10 inches" that were priced for £5 8s. on the original invoice. The personal insignia include Nelson's ducal coronet, the crest of the *San Josée* (a ship that he captured), a viscount's coronet, and an Egyptian aigrette (turban ornament), which is a reference to the Battle of the Nile. Only five pieces of the service were decorated with the aigrette, which was spelled "Egyptian Egrets" on the invoice.

This important dish, an outstanding example of Regency Japan pattern, joins a select group of pieces in the European Department that document England's sea defence. A fabulous gold medal with an impression of Queen Elizabeth I, known as the Danger Averted Medal, and a recently donated silver medal satirizing the plotting of the Spanish/Papist Inquisition commemorate the defeat of the Spanish Armada. The Museum also owns a fine Chamberlain's Worcester tureen decorated in Japanese-inspired pattern with replicas of Armada medals painted in black on the sides. The pattern of the tureen was produced to commemorate the defeat of Napoleon in 1815. Now on display in the Ceramics Gallery of the Samuel European Galleries, the tureen was donated by Mrs. Patricia de Blois Roberts in memory of her husband Ian Roberts. Such pieces are fine examples of the Museum's commitment to the collection of historical European decorative arts.

PETER KAELLGREN
Peter Kaellgren is assistant curator in charge of the European Department, Royal Ontario Museum

Rigatoni Vesuvian Style is an appetizing combination of pasta, tomatoes, capers, olives, and cheese.

The Mediterranean Way of Eating

IF "YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT" IS A serious statement then there are more reasons than political ones to be concerned about the Canadian identity. We grow up with fast food and junk food; we graduate to power breakfasts, business lunches, and microwave dinners; we grab Cinnabuns, fries and burgers on the run, or worst of all, a coffee and a cigarette. Welcome to the hustle-bustle of the modern world and all its stress-related illnesses directly related to eating habits.

According to the latest nutritional research, there is a simple way to achieve a healthy identity through eating. Our ancestors, especially those from the shores of the Mediterranean, were ahead of us in more ways than one; their natural diet has proven to be the best medicine to combat the "civilization illnesses" (obesity, coronary heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, digestive and liver ailments, etc.) of the twentieth century.

In the ancient Mediterranean world an important triad provided the source for the basics of the everyday diet: wheat, olive trees, and vines. They were the only crops that could stand the hot climate, poor soil conditions, and lack of rainfall, and that could produce food that could be kept in storage. Fish, fowl, cheese, vegetables, and fruit were supplementary market items. Most noticeable by its absence was red meat; there was not enough pasture for large cattle herds, and sheep and goats were worth more alive as providers of wool and milk. Some exceptions were made in the case of spring lambs and kids for Easter celebrations. Wine, in moderate quantities, was present at both noon and evening meals; distilled liquor was not available as it required too much fuel to produce.

Now, in the age of affluence and the Common Market, millions of Mediterranean people have started to use meat and dairy products regularly. The consequences of the dietary changes have been studied by the World Health Organization as well as national nutritional institutes. Results have shown much higher rates of cardiovascular disease and gastrointestinal cancers with the increase in consumption of animal fats. At a recent conference organized by the Italian Trade Commission two noted professors of food science from Italian universities, Dr. Marcello Ticco and Dr. Gianni Tomassi, provided statistical information on the results of inter-

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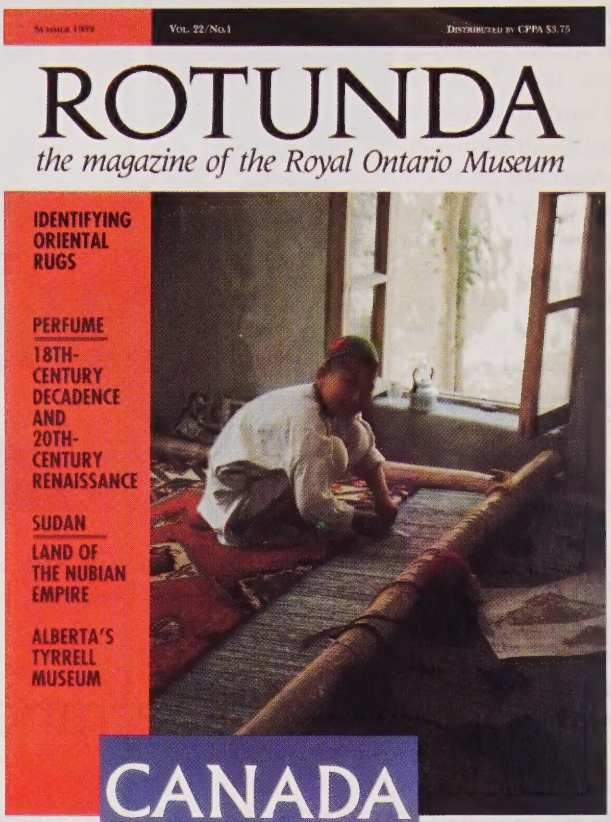

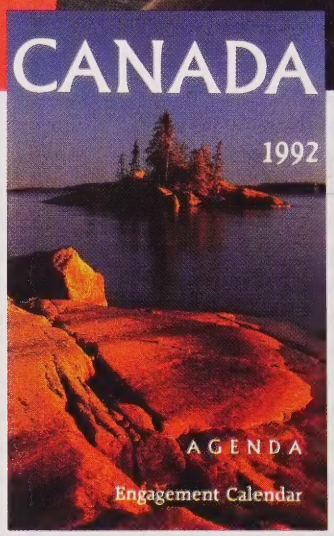

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vention studies concerning the application of the traditional Mediterranean diet. The value of the "poor diet," so named because it was so prevalent in the poorer southern parts of Italy, was explained, and it became obvious that prosperity does not necessarily lead to a healthier life style.

The most important elements of the traditional diet are represented by the original triad from ancient times. Olive oil, a mono-unsaturated fat, assists in digestion while protecting the arteries, stomach, and liver. Studies have shown that 50 grams of olive oil consumed daily is more beneficial than drugs in improving cholesterol and blood pressure levels.

Wine, made from the fruit of the vine and one of the world's most natural foods, aids digestion, stimulates appetites, and relieves stress. Medical scientists have found a strong relationship between moderate wine consumption and low death rate from heart disease. Many dieticians in hospitals and nursing homes have found that serving wine with meals has helped patients become more sociable, adopt a more positive outlook, and experience improved blood pressure and better sleep.

The fundamental component of the Mediterranean diet, according to Professor Gianni Tomassi, is pasta. Besides being affordable, low in calories, and palatable in a variety of ways, pasta is made from Durham wheat that is rich in complex carbohydrates, contains a fair amount of edible fibres, has a very low fat and cholesterol content, and contains a good amount of proteins, iron, and vitamins. Best of all, studies in nutrition at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology have proven that the consumption of pasta has a clear anti-stress effect. The carbohydrates in pasta immediately increase the serotine level in the brain, which has an influence on humour, appetite, and sleep. In other words, pasta makes you feel good.

To complement the traditional triumvirate, add whole grain bread and cereals, which are slowly and completely digested and efficiently burned, and legumes such as beans, peas, chickpeas, and lentils, which are high in protein and complex carbohydrates yet contain no saturated fat. Also recommended are vegetables rich in vitamin A (beta-carotene), such as broccoli, carrots, cabbage, spinach, eggplant, and mustard greens, and fruits such as grapes, figs, apricots, peaches, melons, and oranges, which supply natural sugars to replace rich desserts. Fish is one of the few regular luxuries included in the diet. Fish oils from sardines, anchovies, mackerel, swordfish, and tuna help reduce other blood fat and shield against coronary heart disease. And some legends are true. Garlic does have protective powers; it and other members of the lily family such as shallots, onions, and leeks apparently can influence the way fats are metabolized and reduce serum choles-

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terol. However, the garlic must be ingested; wearing it around the neck just will not work.

After all the well-documented data and statistics were presented, guests at the conference were invited to take part in a practical application of its nutritional philosophy. Different pasta dishes were served, accompanied by wine. The most nutritious and delicious was *Pasta E Fagioli,* a very common soup found in homes and restaurants all over Italy. Try it for your health's sake.

PASTA E FAGIOLI
(Pasta and Bean Soup)
Ingredients

- 150 gm dried white beans
- 60 mL olive oil
- 1 garlic clove
- 30 mL or more canned tomato pulp
- 2 bouillon cubes
- 150 gm tubular semolina macaroni
- 1 sprig parsley
- 15 mL or to taste freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano

Method

Soak the beans in cold water for approximately 12 hours. Rinse, then boil in 2 litres of water for about one hour and 20 minutes; save cooking liquid for later. Take about half of the boiled beans and pass them through a sieve or a food mill. Put 30 mL of oil in a pot and sauté garlic. Add chopped tomato pulp, bouillon cubes, whole beans, and bean purée to pot. Stir and let simmer. After five minutes add liquid from boiled beans and bring back to a boil. Add pasta and cook for about 15 minutes. Remove soup from heat and let it sit for a few minutes. Serve with chopped parsley, grated Parmigiano cheese, and remaining 30 mL of olive oil.

RIGATONI VESUVIAN STYLE
Ingredients

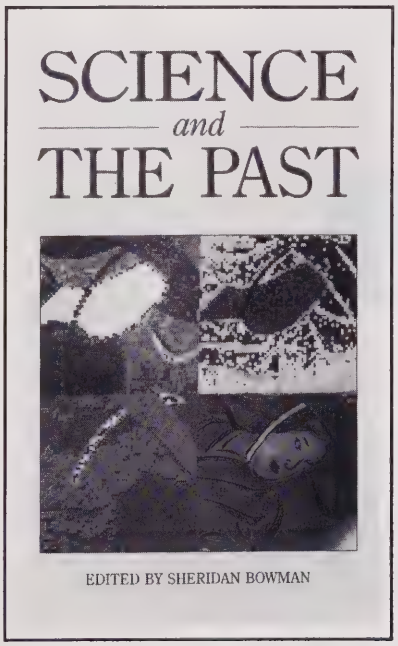
- 320 gm semolina rigatoni
- 30 gm coarse salt
- 60 mL olive oil
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 can Italian tomatoes
- 15 mL capers in vinegar
- 125 mL pitted, chopped black olives
- 1 dash ground chili pepper
- 5 mL oregano
- 15 mL grated Parmigiano Reggiano
- optional black pepper

Method

Bring 4 litres of water with 30 mL coarse salt to a boil. Add the rigatoni. Heat the oil in a small saucepan and sauté garlic; add canned tomatoes, capers, olives, chili pepper, oregano, and a pinch of salt. Cover and simmer on low for about 25 minutes. When pasta has been cooked tender but firm to the bite, drain and pour into a serving dish. Mix with sauce, grated cheese, and freshly ground black pepper. Toss, coating all pieces of rigatoni. Serve with extra Parmigiano Reggiano cheese.

GERALDINE RUBINO
Geraldine Rubino is a food writer based in Toronto

A fascinating, behind-the-scenes look at how museums answer questions. How long ago was this made? With what techniques, and of what materials? How do we know it's authentic? Staff members of the British Museum's Department of Scientific Research explain how the physical and computer sciences are used to study and preserve the record of the past. $40.00



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Modern Dress

Are we too buried in the 1960s to greet the year 2000?

By David Livingstone

Woe to him who studies the antique for anything else but pure art, logic, and general method. By steeping himself too thoroughly in it, he will lose all memory of the present; he will renounce the rights and privileges offered by circumstances—for almost all our originality comes from the seal which Time imprints on our sensations.
Charles Baudelaire, from The Painter of Modern Life, ***an essay, 1863***

Grow up, Heather. Bulimia is so '87.
One teenage girl to another one puking, from Heathers, ***a film, 1989***

Me, I'm just me. I never seem to be able to get into the swing of using "time as a colour" in my wardrobe ... I have enough trouble just being now.
Douglas Coupland, from Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture, ***a novel, 1991***

Baudelaire should have been there. At the show when the mannequin came out in flowerpot straw hat, shades, and sleeveless dress, all ready for 1965, except that it was October 1990. In that month, during presentations of designer collections for spring 1991, the 1960s, like a family of ghosts, were unpacked on the world's runways. Here were: stretch headbands; teased hair, flipped, coiled, and piled; spare frocks, A-line and chemise; a dress of metal; a vinyl skirt. And even as the 1960s were returning, so were the 1970s, represented by wide lapels, permed hair, shagged hair, maxi lengths, skinny knits, open-neck shirts. Altogether, it was enough to make one feel trapped in the pages of a magazine—an old magazine.

David Livingstone is a fashion writer for The Globe and Mail

Just to add to the confusion, the word "modern" has lately emerged as fashion lingo. The program notes for New York designer Michael Kors's fall 1991 show spoke of "the continuing evolution of modern style." A key lime dress in an Eaton's catalogue becomes "a thoroughly modern use of colour and shape." A press release for American menswear designer Andrew Fezza decides, "Less really is more."

Modern Dress is what feels new and stimulating at that moment
• *Rei Kawakubo*

Such talk actually meant something when voiced by Mies van der Rohe and the other originators of architecture's modernism, a scheme of thought, following Art Nouveau and Art Deco, that flattered itself as being true, honest, conscientiously in favour of putting technology to work for humankind, with houses as machines for living in a generally anti-decorative functionalist mode. This was the modernism that by the 1960s was being challenged. Robert Venturi, in *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966) declared, "Architects can no longer afford to be intimidated by the puritanically moral language of orthodox modern architecture," and argued on behalf of a belief in being guided by "a conscious sense of the past, by precedent, thoughtfully considered."

In the course of the 1960s, fashion too had come to dissociate itself from modernism. To begin with, there had been an intense fling with the hard-edged, the planar, the synthetic. *Vogue* in 1964 had claimed Courrèges as futurist, Pucci as "a visionary whose vision of women is the essence of modernity." But, as the decade wore on, a spiritual panic set in, brought on by the cumulative effect of Cold War anxiety, Vietnam on TV, the death of God, and new worries about ecology. As has been often said since, it was then that nostalgia became sweeter than expectation, that a fear of the future occasioned a romantic appreciation of the past.

MODERN DRESS is one that must accommodate the mobile society in which we live. It should be weightless, wrinkle-free and travel well
• *Geoffrey Beene*

Last fall as another Cardin retrospective was being trotted out, this time at the Victoria and Albert in London, the French designer, in an interview with the *Herald-Tribune*'s Suzy Menkes, wondered why people had become frightened. Obviously he had not stopped to consider that the proliferation of designer labels on undistinguished goods, such as he pioneered, was exactly the kind of machine-driven exploitation that gave modernity a bad name and drove people to search for originality and workmanship in thrift stores. A generation decked itself out in the vintage, the recycled, the secondhand.

Modern Dress **is not changing shapes but the way that shapes are intermixed and how elements are re-styled. The rules of dressing have broken down. Modern dressing is when you re-proportion all of the elements**
• *Giorgio Armani*

A kind of secondhand experience was also espoused in modern art as practised by Andy Warhol, who was fearless in the face of mechanical reproduction, not caring how far he left the original and the authentic behind. Nostalgia could be second-hand too, as people developed a yearning for yesterdays that they themselves had never known. Side by side with the pastoral, back-to-the-earth revival was fashion's return to the 1930s and 1940s. And this return was reflected in a whole spectrum of cultural realms: Dietrich revivals in repertory cinemas; Bette Midler's platform shoes; *File* magazine, from the Toronto art trio General Idea, modelled after old *Life*; Saint Laurent's retro collection; the chubby jacket; the cocktail hat.

This wave went more or less unchallenged until the mid-1970s, when punk, as British writer Peter York has pointed out, took up the word "modern" without irony. As if sickened by any camp double meaning, bands like The Jam cried, "This is the modern world." However, even as they did so, young people, in perhaps the speediest revival of the century, went back to the 1960s by sporting fishnet stockings, plastic, and miniskirts, as if they were rejoining a progress that had been interrupted.

MODERN DRESS IS COMFORT. IT'S FUNCTIONAL. IT'S DAY TO EVENING. IT'S SEASONLESS, AND IT'S PACKABLE
• ***DONNA KARAN***

Even though Peter York was writing about recycling the 1960s and pinpointing this mod revival as a sub-theme of punk in the late 1970s, mainstream fashion took almost another entire decade to embrace full-fledgedly the miniskirt and the beehive hairdo. It was as if punk's modernizing potential in its reaffirmation of the values that define modernism—functional, a distaste for decoration, and an insistence that design be of this time and of service to the general public—was stunted by the scorn directed at its outrageousness.

Last year the 1960s made their third appearance. Not surprisingly this time the event seemed arbitrary, arid, last-ditch. One dissenting reaction to the return of Pucci was that of Cynthia Heimel who wrote last April in *The Village Voice:* "It's bad enough that they seem to have had some secret summit conference where they all took acid and decided, 'The '60s! That's what they all want! We'll make a killing!' That's muddy-headed and stupid and boring enough. But what's even worse is that in 1991 we're not seeing racks and racks of the clothing that young people wore in the '60s. We're seeing racks and racks of what young people's mothers wore in the '60s."

Clothing revivals are nothing new. Barbara Burman Baines, in *Fashion Revivals: From the Elizabethan Age to the Present Day,* describes seventeenth-century masques where the look was Old Masters, and explains how the image of Mary Queen of Scots triggered trends in the nineteenth century. In this century, the 1930s were a period of multiple revivals. In *The Indecisive Decade: The World of Fashion and Entertainment in the Thirties,* Madge Garland observed of 1939: "No Walter Mitty fantasy could have reflected more wish-fulfilments: the Edwardian, the Victorian, the sentimental, the simple, the sophisticated, and the sexy were all in vogue... Edwardian leg-o'-mutton sleeves rubbed shoulders with small-waisted, swinging Russian coats, the Chinese influence vied with Scap's sari gowns and Hindu headscarves, pale satin crinolines covered with black lace à l'Empress Eugenie were contrasted with classically draped jersey by Alix... There was no period which was not ransacked for ideas except the present, at which no one could bear to look."

To be flippant, MODERN DRESS is just really awful
• ***Vivienne Westwood***

There were some exceptions. To flip through a *Harper's Bazaar* from 1935 is to see modernism manifest in a Schiaparelli bracelet in the shape of factory cogs, and expressed in a Munkacsi photograph of a housewife leaving an A & P with bags containing "two broilers, two dozen White Rock, three cans of tomato soup, five pounds of granulated sugar." This photo was a landmark in fashion-magazine depiction of life as it is actually led.

That, for all the revivalism, the 1930s yielded enough originality for themselves later to be re-enacted sartorially might be a comfort to those who think we are doomed to be ever repeating ourselves. Never mind reasons to think that we are doomed, period. Tomorrow may never come. That real possibility having been acknowledged, recycling now

has a moral edge. However, what might seem to benefit the future may seem, at the same time, to deny it. In the opening program of a TVOntario series about "green" living, the earnest host, preaching reduce, recycle, reuse, advised buying clothes that would endure. Her point was illustrated by a jacket that was already long out of date. At such a juncture, the wicked would say that if the future means going around in a jacket with shoulderpads and revers from 1984, what's to look forward to?

Ironically, a concern for the future as expressed by the "triple Rs" applied to fashion might lead to the kind of resistance to change that characterizes the corporate sector (sometimes posited as the environment's worst enemy) and that is clearly evident in corporate dressing. No outfit, outside the ceremonial, is more stuck in time, more vestigial, than that of the businessman, with the symbolic buttons on his sleeve that are there because they are there.

"One day I heard an old seamstress saying to a young seamstress: 'Never a button without a buttonhole.' This simple and admirable statement could serve as a motto for couturiers and also for architects, musicians, and painters." According to her biographer, that was an anecdote that Chanel was fond of, and Chanel, according to legendary fashion sybil Diana Vreeland, "showed modern emancipated women how to dress."

The 1960s are beaten back to life in this 1991 outfit from Byblos.

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY BYBLOS

Poiret had banished corsetry; Vionnet was a champion of simplicity; but Chanel, again, in Vreeland's phrases, "institutionalized the clean white shirt, the pullover sweater, the skirt with two pockets placed precisely where the hands expected to find them, the suits with cardigan jackets—all the clothes we now call 'basic.'"

In dressing modern woman, Chanel borrowed heavily from men, taking the stuff of their underwear (jersey) and pants. "It is possible that the advance of the trouser for women is the most significant fashion change of the twentieth century," says Elizabeth Wilson in *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity,* a 1985 book that makes its own contribution to modernism as a costume history that takes feminism into account. Wilson, for example, acknowledges the view that trousers might be but an example of women's progress being at the mercy of male terms. Indeed, if the terms were truly equal, it would be equally modern for a man to dress in skirts, but, as Wilson explains, that is only perceived as deviancy in a culture "positively phobic about 'effeminacy.'"

As the one who has proposed skirts for men and, for women, brassieres so exaggeratedly pointed you could carry a purse on them, Paris designer Jean-Paul Gaultier has mocked fear of the effeminate to a degree that registers as political, though he declines to be known simply as either a political man or an advocate of cross-dressing. "A skirt has no sex," he told *DNR* (an American menswear trade journal) last July. "A skirt is a way to put fabric on the body. That's all."

For Gaultier to insist that a skirt is nothing but an arrangement of cloth is to strip clothing of its allusions, its references, so over-

emphasized in post-modernism, and to declare the primacy of function. This attitude has been most fully explored in athleticwear. Modern sneakers are machines for running and jumping, and offer a clear example of a connection between play and progress, with playing fields, far more often than couture houses, serving as fashion's testing ground for garments and materials that perform. Recreational dress, from early bathing costumes to the Reebok Pump, has set new standards not only in modesty but also in technological advancement. Lately, stretch fabrics have been lending modernity to both men's and women's body coverings and have gone from activewear to streetwear to the upper reaches of high fashion, notably as a plank in the career dressing platform of New York's very successful Donna Karan. In Europe last October, Karl Lagerfeld demonstrated how he manages to maintain Chanel as a modern label when he sent out a Chanel suit comprising a jacket inspired by scuba gear and stretch pants, which are more commonly the uniform of bicycle couriers.

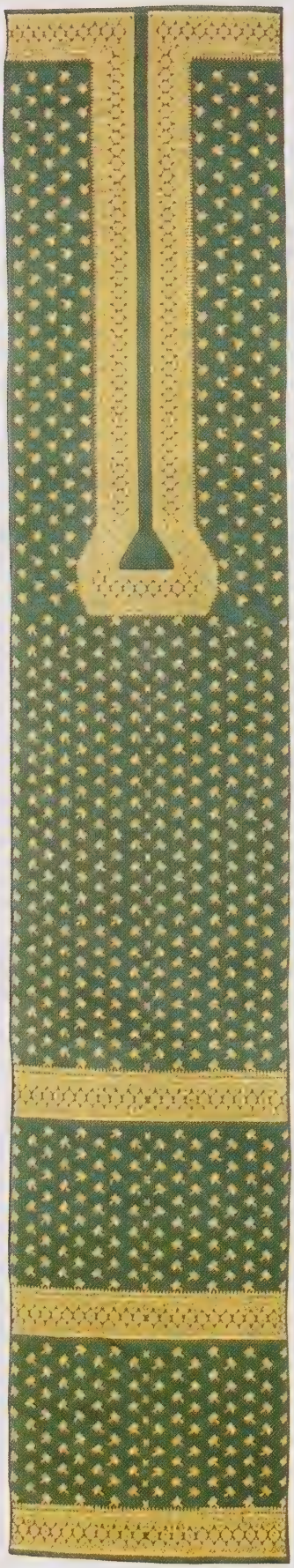
Geoffrey Beene created this thoroughly modern dress for his "Wings of Desire" collection in 1991.

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY GEOFFREY BEENE

A rejection of the technological was an aspect of the interest in nostalgic dress that held sway in the late 1960s. Polyester, which started out as an easy-care miracle, so saturated the market that some people preferred to seek out the natural fibres from days gone by. However, polyester, long an instant, scornful put-down, has recently regained respectability as microfibre, a new, more refined generation of synthetics. Along with microfibre, other man-made materials, such as nylon and plastic, are showing up in modish collections.

Another sign of renewed interest in modern fashion is this fall's exhibition at Manhattan's Fashion Institute of Technology, *Halston: Absolute Modernism.* In 1989, in a show and book entitled *The Historical Mode: Fashion and Art in the 1980s,* FIT curators Richard Martin and Harold Koda explored postmodernism and what they called "its self-conscious and learned archaisms." They decided to mount a Halston retrospective because, says Koda, "We felt it was time to take a look at fashion that was non-referential." Even while retro was in full swing, Halston stuck to minimal designs, sometimes involving only two pattern pieces. "With Halston, a dress is a dress, pants are pants," says Koda, "but on that spare vocabulary he was able to base a style."

Coincidentally, the Halston retrospective arrives at a point when the return of Ultrasuede to designer collections adds more fuel to the worry that fashion may never know a true tomorrow, may be doomed to go back to the future, a concept that should be no more than a joke but keeps registering as real. On the morning of the first day of the next millennium, it may be, as it is now, modern to be in possession of something that is clean and that fits. ❦



PHOTOGRAPHY BY LOUISE MACKIE

The Threads of Time in Fez, Morocco

Three textile scholars record textile making traditions through the modern medium of video

By Louise W. Mackie

THIS IS A STORY ABOUT A PROJECT IN WHICH ancient techniques were explored and documented with the latest in video technology, a task that at times was propelled more by pure idealism than experience. The reward has been great, for a slice of living history is now preserved for posterity.

Through my research at the Royal Ontario Museum and a course in Lyon, France, I became increasingly fascinated with brocaded silks, textiles woven with exquisite and intricate patterns. Brocaded silks have been luxury items in Islamic and European cultures for centuries and I was curious to learn more about how they were made and used. Almost everywhere automation had completely supplanted the traditional handmade work. In Fez, Morocco, brocades are still created by hand on age-old drawlooms, following a 1500-year-old tradition. Fez provided the unique opportunity to discover what handmade-textile practices could reveal about this culture as well as other cultures where comparable practices no longer existed.

In 1986 I set off on my first trip to Fez. Names and addresses led to workshops where I stayed for hours, even days. I watched a brocaded "silk" (in fact rayon or polyester) being woven, centimetre by centimetre, on a huge drawloom operated by two skilled craftsmen. Slowly the luxurious old silks in the ROM and other museums took on new meaning. Clearly the workings of the ingenious drawloom, invented about 1000 years before the printing press and once considered as significant, had to be made more accessible to the public and scholars alike. But how? The answer was video. There was a sense of urgency because I realized that even in Fez the drawloom was threatened with extinction much like an endangered species of animal.

Coincidentally, just after my return to Toronto, two textile scholars, Lotus Stack of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, and Frieda Sorber of the Textielmuseum Vrieselhof, Oelegem-Ranst, Belgium, happened to visit the ROM. Lotus Stack had made a short video about a Chinese drawloom, and both she and Frieda Sor-

Louise W. Mackie is curator in the Textile Department of the Royal Ontario Museum and project director of Threads of Time: Traditional Textiles in Fez, Morocco

ber were riveted by the prospect of documenting the creation and use of brocaded silks in Fez for the benefit of future generations. We became a team, aided by Mark Stanley, who had produced videos about textiles with Stack in Minneapolis.

In 1987 we travelled to Morocco to define our project and to make contacts with officials and craftspeople. As in many cultures the finest handmade fabrics are worn and displayed at weddings, and thus fabrics associated with weddings became the focus for our project. When we returned in 1989 and 1990 we were joined by Susan S. Davis, an anthropologist who had been conducting fieldwork in a village near Fez and who had even taught embroidery, and by two invaluable translators-cum-consultants, Amal Bennani Benghazi of Fez and Leila Abouzeid of Rabat.

EVEN IN FEZ, THE HANDICRAFT CAPITAL OF MOROCCO, THE DRAWLOOM WAS THREATENED WITH EXTINCTION

Preceding pages: (Left) Using six pattern programs, the front, back, and two sleeves of a kaftan are woven sequentially on a drawloom for tailoring into one garment. (Right) A dazzling example of gold-thread embroidery with a pattern that spells Allah in four directions was designed by Ahmed Benhayia and executed by a skilled hand embroiderer.

Fez is a city of contrasts where old traditions and new practices are constantly evolving and being integrated into daily life. Only in Fez can one examine a variety of sophisticated handmade fabrics once typical of urban cultures and find that the manufacture and use of these textiles is still vital. The reasons for this rare combination of dynamic traditional and modern textile manufacture are geographic, political, religious, and economic. Founded in A.D. 789, Fez lies on two rivers amidst rolling hills. It was the former political capital and today thrives as the cultural and handicraft capital of Morocco.

Because many Fezi are directly involved with handicrafts (or at least their parents were) they are knowledgeable consumers who can easily judge the quality of a product. They appreciate the skills, artistry, and time required to make textiles, and are willing, when able, to pay substantial sums for them. In contrast, western tourists usually lack trained eyes. Their purchases of inferior products, in the opinion of many local businessmen, have caused some decline in quality dating back to at least the 1930s, as some craftsmen cater to tourists' tastes.

During our 1989 trip to Fez we conducted fieldwork, and in 1990, with the entire team, we achieved our goals by videotaping textiles associated with weddings and by interviewing craftspeople, merchants, and consumers. Documented textiles were purchased for future exhibitions.

Weddings vary in length; we taped a four-day celebration, which included a party where the new home was completely furnished in only a few hours, a henna party to decorate the bride's hands, a wedding reception hosted by the bride's parents and another hosted by the parents of the groom. Many Fezi brides prepare seven to 10 elegant outfits to wear during the celebrations. *Neggafa* (wedding consultants) provide the distinctive Fezi wedding costume, which is so important culturally that it is paraded on poles on national holidays. Both the long wedding head-shawl and the kaftan are still woven by hand on drawlooms.

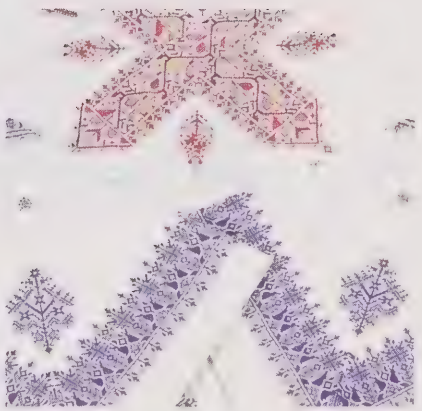
Drawlooms are sophisticated machines. They are operated by a weaver who is responsible for the fabric's structure, and by a drawboy who sits at the side of the loom and is responsible for the design. The two men work sequentially and efficiently to accomplish the slow, precise, labour-intensive job. They take four hours to weave one metre of the fashionable *behja* (crown) design used for covering divans in Moroccan salons. The more colours in a pattern the longer it takes to weave because each colour is interlaced separately.

Patterns are tied onto drawlooms, a precise process that requires hours or days or even weeks to complete. Yet once a design is tied on the drawloom, it can be easily retrieved. In this sense the ancient drawloom is like a computer. But the memory of the drawloom is limited, and large patterns that are not in use must be detached and stored. When the patterns are needed again, it only takes two to three hours to reattach them.

Abdelkader Ourregli, a drawloom owner and weaver, prices his handwoven yardage competitively with the yardage woven in mere minutes on the automated modern looms of Ben Cherif, the renowned Fez manufacturer of furnishing fabric who makes his product look as much like the handwoven fabrics as possible. Only experts can detect the difference.

The fashionable *behja* design provides historical and cultural insights. It is based on French silks woven in Lyon specifically for the Moroccan market as part of a group of fabrics known as "Textiles for the Orient." They were exported by the 1920s or perhaps even earlier and were enormously popular in Fez. One lab technician told us that she was buying 86 metres of the *behja* design to furnish her salon "because it's traditional. We in Morocco realize now that traditional things have more value than modern ones."

One fashion that was popular in the 1960s, and that has been of longstanding interest to textile curators at the ROM, follows an ancient custom. Kaftans were woven on drawlooms as piece goods. Using six pattern programs, the front, back, and two sleeves were woven sequentially for tailoring into one garment. The length of the garment is predetermined because the fancy bottom border can not be shortened.



Weaving elaborately patterned fabrics is only one of several kinds of handmade textile manufacture in Fez; there is also embroidery, and several different types of embroidery are prominent at weddings. Unlike weaving, which requires considerable equipment and space and is generally done by men, embroidery occupies thousands of skilled Fezi women from all walks of life, who require only minimal equipment —a needle, thread, ground fabric, and embroidery frame. Traditionally, young girls were taught embroidery by a family member, and they would start with items for their trousseaus. Although some girls still practise this custom, the greater educational opportunities for girls today leave them less time for such pursuits. Brides can purchase ready-made embroidery; however, the finest quality must be ordered months, even a year, in advance.

Fez-stitch embroidery is the oldest and the most culturally significant, as well as the most durable, difficult, time-consum-

Top (Left): Wedding costumes made from exquisite woven and embroidered fabrics are considered so important that they are paraded on poles during national holidays. (Right) Fez-stitch embroidery is the oldest, most culturally significant, durable, difficult, time-consuming, and expensive. Bottom: The embroidered and woven furnishing fabric in the salon of a Fezi home emulate the design of the wall tiles.

ing, and expensive. Its designs, which comprise geometric and plant shapes in one to seven colours, are renowned in Morocco and abroad. Fez-stitch embroidery is formed by a reversible counted-thread stitch, often associated with cross-stitch. Modern brides prepare or order tablecloths with matching napkins and topsheets with matching pillowcases, items that became fashionable in the 1950s as a result of the French occupation (1912-1956). Partially fuelled by regional pride, Fez-stitch embroidery is experiencing a revival.

Motivation is the key to learning the Fez stitch, according to Mme Rabea El Mernissi, who has been teaching it since the 1950s. In the three-year curriculum, students learn by making motifs, starting with the simplest and building to the most complex. "They start with [the equivalent of] letters, then do sentences," explains Mme El Mernissi. In the process, samplers are made that graduates can use for reference and for showing to customers who wish to choose specific motifs.

THOUSANDS OF FEZI WOMEN FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE ARE HIGHLY SKILLED IN THE ART OF EMBROIDERY

No motifs are drawn on the cloth as guidelines. The embroiderers must count the number of threads that each stitch goes over and under, and given the process, the speed at which they work is astounding.

Commissioned embroideries are usually ordered directly from embroiderers, which permits customers to select colours and designs. Prices are based on the quality of the ground fabric, the number of colours, the number of skeins of embroidery thread used, and the time that will be required. A topsheet with a double border and four pillowcases, needing about 170 skeins of thread, costs about $240 and can take anywhere from three months to three years of constant work to complete. A more realistic estimate for a bedsheet set or a tablecloth set is about eight months.

Imitations of Fez-stitch embroidery abound on textiles, paper, and plastic, which confirms its cultural importance. The most surprising imitations are woven, produced since at least the 1920s. This contradicts the widespread practice of embroidery imitating woven textiles. The woven imitations are intended primarily as cushion and divan covers in traditional Moroccan salons. Their existence came about for purely economic reasons; woven imitations of Fez-stitch embroidery take a fraction of the time to make and cost little in comparison to their highly esteemed models.

Another type of embroidery, gold-thread, is also widely associated with Fez. It was the chief export item early in this century and still is a thriving industry. Clothing items such as slippers, belts, circumcision suits, kaftans, and, of course, items associated with weddings may display gold-thread embroidery.

When the bride's hands are decorated with henna at a wedding party, a special gold-thread-embroidered velvet henna set is used. The set includes such traditional items as the mendil, a large rectangular piece placed on the bride's lap; two pillows on which she rests her arms; and mitts to protect her decorated hands. A recent addition is an embroidered tissue-box cover—an example of traditions that are constantly evolving in subtle ways. At weddings the bride is paraded during the reception in a domed canopy, elaborately decorated with gold thread. She and her groom, both wearing traditional costumes, are also raised in trays, decorated with gold thread, by strong *neggafa* so that all the guests may admire and applaud them, while lively music is played.

Gold-thread embroidery is constantly changing. About 1930 real gold thread was replaced by low-grade "gold" thread and silk velvet was eventually replaced by synthetic fibres. Some high-quality, ready-made, gold-thread-embroidered items are available in specialty stores, although most fine work must be ordered. Consumers may choose their own motifs, but certain motifs are associated with specific functions. For example, peacocks are currently popular for wedding items. However, good artisans can make any design. With the aid of a magnifying glass Lahcen Moussaid copied the ROM logo from a piece of stationery onto yellow paper templates for embroiderers to cover with gold thread.

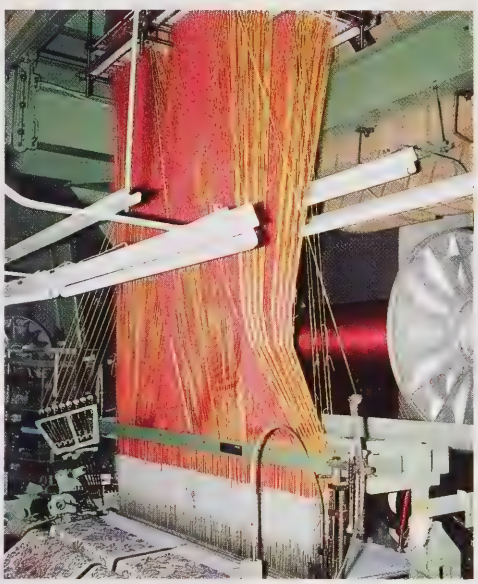
While gold-thread embroidery is quickly learned, it takes time to master. The embroiderer keeps the gold thread on top of paper

templates, secured by a plain thread that is brought up from underneath. This is called underside couching. The best embroiderers are well known and are given more difficult designs such as calligraphy, where long lines must be maintained. One painter, Ahmed Benhayia, who currently designs calligraphy, gives equal credit to the embroiderer for her skills.

A third type of embroidery, produced by sewing machine, is now the most common and the most innovative. For example, one clever woman copied the embroidery design on an Egyptian singer's robe while she watched her on television, a splendid example of electronic design transmission. As with Fez- and gold-stitch embroidery, the finest items are usually commissioned and can take from weeks to months to produce.

These impressive and varied techniques of weaving and embroidery, and the people and places associated with them, were captured on videotapes that are now being edited to a 30-minute program for general audiences and for teaching purposes, and to detailed programs for specialists. Research and fieldwork are always carried out to find answers to specific questions, and sometimes the results provide information well beyond what was anticipated. This certainly applies to the work in Fez, and it has strengthened our belief that, at present, the documentation of threatened traditional practices—the context for so much material culture—is more important for future generations than our study of existing collections that are properly conserved and safely stored.

In Fez, the traditional drawloom (top) and its team of artisans are being replaced by the automated loom (bottom). Automated looms, like this one owned by Ben Cherif, can weave in minutes the same amount of the popular *behja* design that would take hours to produce on a drawloom.



The Royal Ontario Museum and the Future Fund Today—ROM Endowment, and the Minneapolis Institute of Arts are gratefully acknowledged for their donations of time and funds for the project. Special thanks are also extended to several foundations, corporations, and private individuals.

The Fragrance of Kings

The delicate and fragrant orchid has been a powerful symbol in Chinese culture

By Catherine Pagani

Above: An illustration from the *Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*, 1679-1701. **Left:** A variety of species of *Cymbidium*, the most common genus of orchids found in China.

WITH LONG GRACEFUL LEAVES FORMING gentle arcs and stems heavy with fragrant yellowish-green flowers, orchids have long been admired by the Chinese. The appeal of this plant is much more than simply visual: the orchid is also the symbol of noble character, the perfect friend, loyalty, and the seclusion of the scholar.

Chinese orchids belong to the same plant family, *Orchidaceae*, as the showy and intricately coloured orchids familiar to most Westerners. The orchid family is one of the largest in the plant kingdom, with more than 25,000 species, and of these more than 1000 are native to China. Orchids are grown mostly for their flowers, although some are used for food. The orchid *Vanilla planifolia*, for example, produces long dark pods that provide the familiar flavouring.

The modern Chinese word for orchid, *lan*, was first used as early as the sixth century B.C. and refers to the various species of *Cymbidium*, the most commonly found genus. Of all the orchid species in China, three plants found particular favour: *C. goeringii*, popularly known as spring orchid or orchid par excellence; *C. ensifolium* or Fujian orchid; and *C. pumilum*, known as either grass orchid, summer orchid, or simply *hui* (another term for orchid) in Chinese.

The flowers of the Chinese *Cymbidium* plants are small and unusual in their colouring, but it is the delicate scent for which these plants are most famous. This perfume has attracted the attention of scholars and philosophers throughout Chinese history. Confucius called it "the fragrance of kings."

It is not known for certain how the orchid first obtained its name in China, but early written records mention a fragrant plant called *lan* which, it was believed, could ward off evil spirits found lurking in the forests. *Lan* is, in fact, a homophone for two other Chinese words: one meaning to ward off, to screen, or to stop the approach of something, and the other meaning fence or railing. In the early literature, these three similar-sounding words were occasionally used interchangeably. Throughout history the orchid's power to protect one from evil has

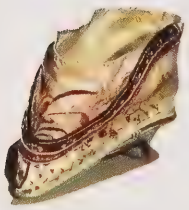
PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY FAR EASTERN DEPARTMENT, ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Catherine Pagani is a research associate of the Royal Ontario Museum

been inextricably connected with the plant, for even as late as the sixteenth century Chinese medical writers mentioned the orchid's unusual ability "to ward off things."

In the first Chinese etymological dictionary, compiled about A.D. 100, *lan* was defined simply as "a fragrant plant," and as such referred to a number of aromatic herbs as well as to the orchid. Only when *Cymbidium* became a popular plant cultivated by officials and scholars did *lan* come to mean the orchid specifically. Today, with very few exceptions, *lan* appears in the Chinese name of each of the genera of Chinese orchids, as well as in the names of other non-orchidaceous plants with spearlike leaves such as the amaryllis, the lily, and the iris.

However, even before the orchid's name was firmly established, it was known for its association with the great sage and philosopher Confucius (551-479 B.C.), who would have been familiar with both wild and cultivated orchid specimens. In his teachings they were a powerful metaphor for men of superior quality who could positively influence those around them with the same subtlety as the orchid's perfume. Confucius also compared the wild orchid growing in a secluded valley with the perfect man, for as the wild orchid blooms whether it is appreciated or not, so too the perfect man will continue to strive for self-discipline and maintenance of virtue even if under stress.



With these noble associations, the orchid became a favourite of scholars and officials who cultivated these plants with great zeal. During the thirteenth century they even wrote special monographs devoted solely to the care and cultivation of orchids. These works discuss the different species, with notes on their care, watering, fertilization, and plant division. For watering, one author recommends pond water in the autumn and rain water the rest of the year. Some orchids should be watered with tea, another advises, for this improves the scent of the flowers. Rain water, he continues, should be collected in earthenware pots and exposed to the sun until it turns green; then it may be used for orchids. These and other treatises on orchids were written not by botanists but by scholars who took their hobby very seriously. In the late sixteenth century, a number of Daoist literati sought a life of seclusion devoted to the cultivation and study of orchids.

Orchids were not simply a decorative studio plant. They were used medicinally and as a subject in literature and the visual arts. One species, *Bletilla striata* (*Bletia hyacinthina*), was known by a number of different names in Chinese such as *baiji* (white mucilagenous root or white chicken, depending on the character used for *ji*) or *zilan* (purple orchid). It was used in treating burns and other skin problems when its ground pseudobulbs (thickened portions of the stem) were mixed with sesame oil. Some even believed that the ground root of the plant could be used in the making of porcelain.

The orchid is strongly associated with Confucius, who in his teachings used the cultivated flower as a powerful metaphor for men of superior quality and the wild flower as a metaphor for the perfect man

Dendrobium orchids were also used in Chinese medicine. As they were found growing on rocks, it was widely thought that they must have incredible strength to be able to conquer the rock and draw nourishment from it, and therefore eating this plant could make the weak strong. Some orchids were thought to act as an analgesic, to lower blood pressure, and to offer relief from rheumatism. But some plants were poisonous, and Chinese history records stories of drunkards who died after quenching their thirst with water from a vase holding orchids.

Around the sixth century B.C. the orchid became a popular image in literature, probably because of the prevalence of Confucian works, which were part of the education of every Chinese scholar. The Confucian metaphor of the orchid representing the perfect man was a recurring theme, especially in poetry.

Scholars in the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties called the place of a distinguished person the *lanshi* or orchid room. They described an example of good teaching as *lanhui*, orchid in-

Facing page: Embroidered shoes for bound feet from the Qing dynasty, c. 1900.

Above: A silk fan decorated with a painting of orchids from the late Qing dynasty (late nineteenth to early twentieth century).

struction, referred to a refined woman as *lanxin,* orchid heart, and a fine piece of writing as *lanzhang,* orchid essay. The scholars who raised orchids considered them good companions, thereby giving rise to the terms *lanqi,* orchid bond, and *lanyou,* orchid friend, both of which mean a close friend. A *lanmeng,* orchid dream, foretells the birth of a son.

Their elegant foliage, unusual flowers, rich symbolic meanings, and association with loyalty to the emperor made orchids an appropriate subject for the scholar-painters of the day. Black-and-white painting using only shades of ink was popular for depicting the plants in keeping with the Chinese notion of *suya,* translated roughly as elegance and refinement.

During the Song dynasty (960-1279), the painting of birds and flowers became a separate genre. Gardening and painting were two of the established leisure activities of the literati, and flowers, especially orchids, became popular subjects. When the invading Mongols forced the Song rulers to move their capital to the south and eventually conquered them, the orchids painted in monochrome inks were used by one prominent artist to show his loyalty to the Song emperors and his rejection of the new Mongol rulers of the Yuan dynasty. His "ink orchids" were painted without backgrounds to symbolize the loss of the artist's native land to foreign invaders. The inscriptions he included on his works often discussed "princely men," clearly associating the orchid with the Confucian ideal. These subtle allusions were extremely popular with the literati, and so the orchid became a standard subject of Chinese painters, whether they were expressing loyalty to their rulers or not.

Orchids were paired with rocks in Chinese painting to suggest delicacy and fragrance associated with strength, a combination that represented good moral values. The term *lanshi,* orchid and stone, means an upstanding character. The flowers were also popular subjects because they could be painted in an acceptable fashion even by amateurs. Because courtesans of the Ming dynasty often chose the orchid for the subject of their paintings, the flowers came to symbolize a beautiful girl living a life of seclusion. And finding a lovely courtesan was said to be like discovering a delicate orchid in a far-off valley.

In addition to painting from life, artists could use woodblock-printed instruction books. The famous *Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting,* published in two parts between 1679 and 1701, gave instructions on how to depict various flora and fauna. Black-and-white illustrations, with the occasional colour plate, showed individual orchid blooms and the full plant in a variety of settings. The author of the manual, quoting a Buddhist monk, wrote that:

When...in a light mood one should paint the orchid, for the leaves of the orchid grow as though they were flying and fluttering, the buds open joyfully, and the mood is indeed a happy one. (Translation by Sze Mai-Mai)

When the invading Mongols forced the Song rulers to move their capital south, a prominent artist painted orchids without backgrounds to symbolize loyalty to his rulers and the loss of his native land

In addition to its symbolic meaning of the perfect man, the orchid was also used as a motif for the decorative arts. Embroideries on women's clothing included orchids, as did the *Flowers of the Four Seasons* and the *Flowers of the Twelve Months* used to decorate porcelains.

Another well-known floral set is the *Four Perfect Men,* containing the prunus, the bamboo, the chrysanthemum, and the orchid. In the *Four Beloved Ones,* each flower represents a famous poet, with the orchid symbolizing the eighth-century poet Wang Wei, who preferred the quiet life of raising orchids to that of an official.

The appeal of orchids for the Chinese began with the writings of Confucius in the sixth century B.C. and has continued to today. So important are orchids to Chinese culture that many men and women have the word *lan* incorporated into their names. The flowers' delicate appearance and captivating fragrance are gentle faces for the strong moral and philosophical ideals that they represent. ❦

Above: Orchids decorate a woman's silk robe made in the late nineteenth century.
Facing page: A twentieth-century porcelain snuff bottle painted with an orchid motif.

STEINWAY

Instrument of the Immortals

Although the competition is good, Steinway pianos still rate as the best in the world

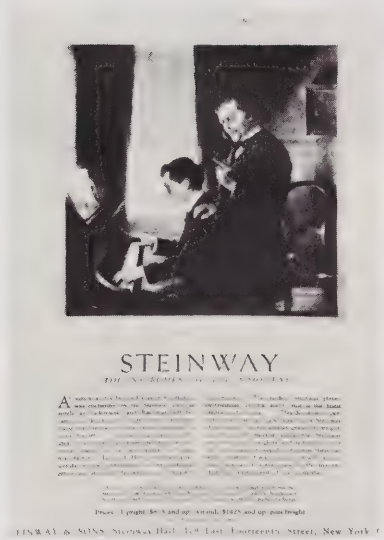
By Cynthia Dann-Beardsley

Vladimir Horowitz's piano is coming to town. The nine-foot concert grand (2.74-metre)—the one used by Horowitz from the early 1940s until his death in 1989—is criss-crossing Canada and the United States on a tour during which it will visit 75 cities. The tour will allow the public not only to see but to play the instrument that brought to life the emotional and musical insights of the legendary virtuoso. Although Horowitz owned several pianos during his 65-year career, the maker was always the same—Steinway & Sons.

Horowitz was a Steinway Artist. He was one among some 800 active performers who play to the crowd on a Steinway; there have been thousands since Steinway began to sponsor artists in 1872. Wherever and whenever such an artist performs, Steinway provides a concert grand for the occasion. In return for this service, the pianist publicly endorses the Steinway name. This is done with little effort by the artist and at great cost to Steinway. "Next to the manufacturing of pianos, our biggest expense is our artists and their pianos. We have 240 of them [pianos] banked around this country. Maintenance alone is very expensive," says Schuyler Chapin, vice-president of concerts and artists for Steinway & Sons.

Steinway is particular about who joins the roster. The pianist must already be a loyal owner of a Steinway, must be an active performer (closet virtuosi need not apply), and must be a staunch believer in the Steinway product. The roster is indeed impressive: Anton Rubinstein was the first; others who followed include Ignace Paderewski, Josef Hofmann, Sergei Rachmaninov, Artur Rubinstein, Claudio Arrau, Rudolf Serkin, Glenn Gould, Daniel Barenboim, and Arturo Benedetti Michelgangeli. Franz Liszt owned a Steinway; so did Richard Wagner. In short, the *crème de la crème* of the music world make their music and their mark with Steinway. Today Steinway & Sons claim that 92 per cent of the world's performing piano soloists play on Steinway pianos. What gives these instruments this "must have" quality?

"It's the sound," says Michael Remenyi, vice-president and general manager of Toronto's Remenyi House of Music. "No other manufac-



Above: Two of the immortal artists sponsored by Steinway were Anton Rubinstein and his student Josef Hofmann. Facing page: A classic Steinway grand piano.

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY STEINWAY & SONS, N.Y.C.

Cynthia Dann-Beardsley is a Toronto arts journalist. She is a producer for several music programs including CJRT's "A Night at the Opera"

turer can duplicate this rich, velvety, clear sound. Engineering principles, yes. Sound quality, no. Everybody is trying, nobody has been successful." The key to this magical sound is pretty much a family secret, but a look at a Steinway and how it is made permits some reading between the lines.

When Heinrich Engelbert Steinweg came to New York City in 1850, the piano was already a well-established instrument. The British called it a pianoforte, the Europeans a fortepiano. Translated from the Italian, this literally means loud-soft, a trait that differentiated it from its musical ancestor the harpsichord, which has little dynamic range. Although he'd been in business in Germany for 25 years, Heinrich Senior and three of his sons took their time assessing the American market and American business practices before setting up Steinway & Sons in 1853. Their first instrument was a square piano and, like any other square piano, was parallel strung; that is to say, the strings ran perpendicular to the keys and parallel to each other. However, in 1855 the Steinways produced the first overstrung piano. Bass strings now crossed over the treble strings, which made it possible to use longer strings. This extra length resulted in a clearer, more powerful bass sound.

A Steinway family portrait, 1927. Standing: Theodore Cassedeer, William Victor, Theodore D. Steinway, Charles F. M. Steinway, Henry Z. Steinway, Frederick Victor, Charles F. G. Steinway. Seated: Paul H.Schmidt, Henry Ziegler, Fritz Steinway, Theodore E. Steinway, Carl Victor, William R. Steinway.

The sound was rich and revolutionary. In 1855 this unique piano was awarded a gold medal at New York's Crystal Palace Exhibition and Industrial Fair. As historical accounts tell it, the judges had already decided on another piano before the competition opened and thus gave the other entries only a perfunctory evaluation at the actual event. A distracted judge opened the lid of the unassuming Steinway and played a few chords. The resonance so astonished everyone that the judges unanimously and spontaneously declared Steinway the winner. Following Steinway's success at the Crystal Palace, the principles of overstringing were then applied to grand pianos.

The first White House Steinway was given the symbolic serial number 100,000 and presented in 1903 to President Theodore Roosevelt as a gift to the American people by the grateful Steinway family. It is now on display in the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

The genius behind this and other technical innovations that thrust Steinway into a piano-making class all its own was C. F. Theodore Steinway, the eldest son of Henry (the family Americanized its name in 1851). Theodore was a brilliant engineer who collaborated at great length with the German physicist and acoustician Hermann von Helmholtz. (In the academic world, Helmholtz is remembered for many things, particularly for performing the first scientific analysis of overtones and how they affect tonal quality.) Until the mid-1850s, piano design sprang more from intuitive than scientific thought. C. F. T. Steinway was the first to consider piano-making a science and his laboratory approach to design revolutionized the industry.

Meanwhile another fine American maker, Jonas Chickering, had introduced a one-piece cast-iron plate to reinforce his piano,

increasing string tension to 40,000 pounds (18,144 kilograms). Projected volume of a piano is directly proportionate to string tension. Still parallel strung, the Chickering piano may have been the most powerful instrument of its day, but it was plagued by a thin, metallic sound. After much meticulous experimentation C. F. T. Steinway combined his own overstrung scale design with Chickering's single-piece cast-iron plate to produce a piano that had Steinway's luscious tone and Chickering's volume. Performers, audiences, critics, and composers were thrilled with this new powerful piano. After a few more adjustments Steinway unveiled a piano in 1875 that is generally recognized as the first modern concert grand.

Today's version is nine feet long with 88 plastic keys (use of ivory was drastically reduced in 1955 and completely discontinued in 1989) and 45,373 pounds (20,581 kilograms) of string tension. If put to the test, this kind of power can lift 10 vintage Cadillacs. It was Theodore Steinway's invention of a one-piece piano rim, in place of the traditional two- or three-piece rim, that allowed for this dramatic increase in tension.

The keyboard of a Steinway is composed of 88 dazzling keys. Once made of ivory, the keys are now made of plastic.

This rim is made up of a number of layers or laminations of wood. With the help of a team of seven workers, careful but brute strength and a winch, the outer rim is bent into the shape of the grand piano. The inner rim's job is to hold Steinway's unique arched soundboard and cast-iron plate in place. Typically, the rim of a nine-foot concert grand is made up of veneer. Only the finest wood goes into a Steinway—hardrock maple, yellow poplar, birch, and Sitka spruce are some—and only old-fashioned animal glue, which is strong without creating any acoustical barrier, coats the wood. The majority of the work is handcrafted and the mechanization that has taken place in the factory has enhanced production. Once the wood has been properly dried, usually for a year, it then takes another nine months to build an upright, a year to build a grand. A Steinway concert grand comprises 12,000 parts and by the time it is ready to leave the factory some 200 craftspersons have had their hands on the developing instrument.

Such highly specialized work carries a correspondingly high price tag. In Canada the Steinway range begins with the $14,000 upright and soars to the $73,999 traditional concert grand, with many models in between, such as the $52,000 Louis XV with ornate carvings, exquisite inlay, and perfectly matched wood grain. Such splendour has been around almost as long as the pianos themselves. "Art case" pianos became very popular during the latter part of the nineteenth century and the first three decades of the twentieth. Hiring such well-known figures as J. Burr Tiffany and Arthur E. Blackmore, Steinway & Sons produced state-of-the-work-of-art instruments that only immensely wealthy industrialists such as F. W. Woolworth and Cornelius Vanderbilt could afford. The in-house art department produced more than 1100 different designs—everything from pianos with gilded carvings to ones resembling log cabins. Only three commemorative Steinways have been created;

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREA BRIZZI

number 100,000, completed in 1903, and 300,000, in 1938, were given as gifts to the White House. Number 500,000, dating from 1988, includes the signatures of nearly a thousand Steinway artists.

Anyone with a little extra cash to spare might be interested in a piano currently for sale at Steinway Hall in New York. Recently discovered in California and subsequently restored, this instrument is thought to be the first art-case piano created for Steinway & Sons in 1865. The asking price is more than $1 million U.S.

Steinway pianos are leaders in the field not only of music-making but of money-making as well. According to *Forbes* magazine, as luxury items for investment, Steinway pianos outperform Mercedes-Benz automobiles, power boats, wine, and gold. Piano rebuilders are scouring the world in search of old Steinways. Regardless of its age or the neglect, or even abuse to which it has been subjected, a Steinway can be restored to its original magnificence. The fact that only the very best materials go into the construction makes it physically and financially possible to rebuild these pianos. A Steinway created between 1929 and 1958 is now worth 5.9 times its original cost; for those dating from 1959 to 1978 the factor of appreciation currently stands at 2.8.

A view of a Steinway factory from the firms' 1888 catalogue. Steinways were manufactured in the United States and Germany.

However, as a popular domestic item, the piano just isn't what it used to be. Since its invention in the mid-eighteenth century, the piano has been viewed as a status symbol, the sign of a cultured household. While gentlemen spent their time riding horseback and hunting, ladies stayed in the parlour perfecting their keyboard technique. Etiquette books instructed young girls how to accept an invitation to play the piano without looking as if the invitation was expected. If the girl chose to play, a man took her arm, escorted her to the piano, held her bouquet and gloves in one hand, and turned the pages for her with the other. There were some 25 piano companies flourishing in Canada and more than 100 in the United States during the golden years of the piano between 1890 and the Depression. The advent of the automobile and the cinema shifted the piano from its central position in domestic social life. Radio and television replaced the keyboard as home entertainment and by the early 1980s such household names as Chickering, Knabe, and Kohler & Campbell were gone. Today only a handful are left—Baldwin, Kimball, Sohmer-Mason-Hamlin, Charles R. Walter, and Steinway. In the late 1960s five Canadian firms still produced 87 per cent of the pianos purchased annually in Canada. The names of Heintzman, Lesage, Mason & Risch, Willis, and Sherlock Manning are alive today only in the memories of nostalgia buffs and piano aficionados and on the remaining instruments scattered across the country.

The second White House Steinway, serial number 300,000, was presented to President and Mrs. Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1938. Josef Hofmann inaugurated the instrument with three Chopin works.

But now a whole new generation of pianists is be-

ing nurtured by foreign makers. Yamaha and Kawai of Japan and Young Chang of Korea, the leaders in what the domestic industry calls "the Asian Invasion," have over the past 20 years virtually captured the mid-price piano market. The price tag of their high-gloss products is a powerful lure: $4000 for an upright, $9600 for a grand. At the high end, Yamaha produces a $73,000 concert grand to match the Steinway. But does the match go beyond price? The ever-important rim of a Steinway is made of hardrock maple. Yamaha officials refused to say what goes into its top-of-the-line rim.

Although a relative newcomer to North America, Yamaha was founded in Japan in 1887 for the production of organs. Postwar industrialization helped launch Yamaha into the international market, setting up a very visible business in Canada and the United States during the 1960s. Today, highly though not totally mechanized assembly lines turn out pianos at lightning speed. This combined with a six-day work week in Japan means that Yamaha can produce more than 200,000 units a year. Compare that to Steinway's annual output of 5000. It took Steinway & Sons 135 years to produce its 500,000th piano—merely the two-year quota for the leading Asian firms.

The iron plate of a Steinway piano reinforces the instrument so that the string tension can be increased, which in turn increases the piano's volume.

Though the Steinways are handcrafted, the final crunch often comes at the cash register, especially for financially strapped arts organizations and universities. A Steinway will undoubtedly outlive its owner. The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York has a 122-year-old Steinway that is still used for the odd recital, and the Juilliard School and the Manhattan School of Music have several Steinways in their practice rooms that are more than 90 years old. But long-term investment carries little weight with fearful or short-sighted administrations in the current era of under-funding. Ten, 20, and especially 80 years seem a long way away when the choice for the budget is one Steinway or several Asian pianos. And if the organization qualifies, those pianos may just come free of charge.

"Yamaha is the official piano of the Metropolitan Opera" reads every program given at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City. For this endorsement, the Met receives more than 40 pianos free-of-charge. These pianos are replaced annually and sold as Met pianos through dealers across the United States. Each one comes with a specially created medallion, proof that it came from a good home.

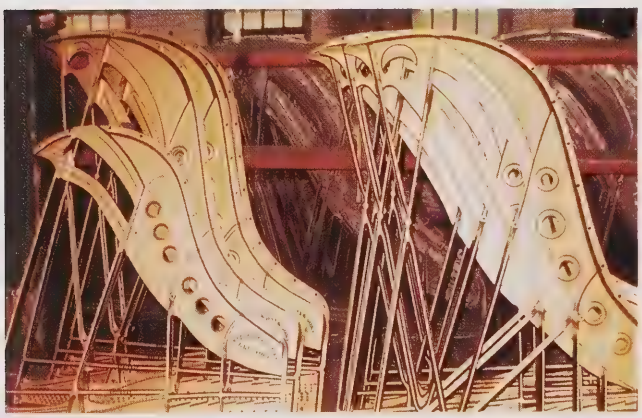
Yamaha Canada extends a helping hand to events such as the Montreal Jazz Festival, the Glory of Mozart Festival, the nation-wide Royal Conservatory of Music examinations, and the Canadian Music Competitions by supplying pianos free-of-charge for the occasion. At the conclusion of the thirty-third Canadian Music Competitions, held last July in Ottawa, for example, the practice instruments were then offered for sale to the public at the University of Ottawa. There's no medallion in this case, but the piano comes at a reduced price and appears to carry the blessing of the Competition—something very important to the aspiring young performer. Yamaha Canada clearly has its eye on the de-

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREA BRIZZI

veloping musician. Says Robert Barg, director of national sales and marketing manager for the Keyboard Department of Yamaha Music Canada Limited, "We've sought to legitimize our product through the institutional market. Ads saying '20 per cent off' mean nothing to the public. Our major activity is reaching teachers. We talk to them personally. They carry a lot of influence." This targeting of educators has results. There are Yamaha pianos in conservatories across the country and the music faculties of the University of Toronto, Wilfrid Laurier, University of Manitoba, and University of British Columbia, to name a few. Executives are delighted that the Manitoba Conservatory of Music uses Yamaha pianos exclusively.

But when it comes to the big time, students have a clear idea about the kind of piano they want. At the prestigious 1991 Gina Bachauer International Piano Competition pianos were provided for the competitors: one Baldwin, one Kawai, one Yamaha, and two Steinways. Of the 52 musicians who appeared, 42 chose Steinway, four Baldwin, three Kawai, and three Yamaha.

Iron plates for Steinway pianos stand in a row. The plates contribute to the pianos' great volume and the overstrung scale design creates the instruments' gorgeous sound.



Some institutions, particularly those in the United States, are buying pianos to match their artistic profile. "If we are in the business of preparing our students to compete at the highest level in the professional world, then don't we have to give them the proper tools, give them the best?" asks Denis Colwell, the assistant head of Carnegie-Mellon University's music department. "We asked that question again and again and when the answer kept coming back an emphatic 'yes,' then the only choice was Steinway." Carnegie-Mellon has just purchased 61 Steinway pianos at a cost of about $1 million U.S. That completely replaces the stock of pianos held by the music department. Aggressive fundraising, much of it aimed at graduates, will pay for these new instruments and within eight months of the launch of the campaign, 25 per cent had come in a steady stream that shows no sign of slowing down. "The response has been tremendous," says Colwell. "Steinway is synonymous with quality and tradition. Look at all the world-class artists who play Steinways. That says it all. They are the best." The Juilliard School in New York City, whose piano stock is 98 per cent Steinway, buys them even for the dance and theatre departments. And across town at the Manhattan School of Music the trend seems to be the same. "The pressure comes from the faculty members," says Ken Powell, vice-president of finance for the school. "They want Steinway." In a concerted drive to upgrade their stock of pianos, the Manhattan School bought five new Steinways last year and hopes to repeat that purchase annually.

Built to celebrate Steinway's 135th anniversary in 1988, piano number 500,000 was decorated with the signatures of nearly 1000 Steinway artists.

Despite this surge of support at the high end of the scale, Steinway has no presence in the large mid-priced market. People graduate to a Steinway, they don't start with one; so when choosing that first instrument, the buyer must go to another firm. Eyeing these first-time buyers, Steinway Musical Properties, the holding company of Steinway & Sons, will launch a new piano early in 1992. Called the

Waltham, it will be manufactured in Japan by Kawai from Steinway blueprints. Buyers who purchase this mid-price instrument will already be in the family when it's time to move up to a Steinway.

While Steinway markets itself on old-world traditions, Yamaha has its eye on the future. In 1991, the Disklavier zapped onto the scene, bringing the piano into the computer era. For $10,000 the Yamaha MX80 will play like a regular piano, connect to a synthesizer, record what you play, and then play it back; or it will play any of the 200 pre-recorded discs produced especially for Disklavier. In playing back, the keys of the instrument move up and down. It's the 1990s' version of the player piano. In bridging the two eras, Yamaha has had the original piano rolls of George Gershwin from 1919-1926 transferred to Disklavier format.

"While listening to the wonderful American Steinway pianos, members of the public are suddenly struck by the rage to be a pianist." This cartoon was presented to Theodore Steinway by Vladimir Horowitz.

But are we ready for the invisible performer? In May of 1990 Air Canada provided its Rapidair Lounge in Terminal Two at Toronto's Pearson International Airport with a Young Chang concert grand piano and a pianist who played a varied repertoire. Seven months later the pianist and his instrument were moved down the corridor to another lounge to make way for a Disklavier. According to Yamaha, the instrument generated a lot of interest during the four months it was displayed, and public response, measured by specially designed Disklavier software, was favourable. Air Canada on the other hand received calls wondering where the traditional piano and its player were. It seems that the travellers enjoyed not only live music but the live pianist as well; he took requests and as a courtesy provided the correct time and the direction of the newsstand. At the end of the Yamaha contract the concert grand was moved back. Mary DiBiase, customer sales and service supervisor for Air Canada, was put in charge of the project. "Our Rapidair Lounge is the busiest. It's mostly business people flying to Montreal and Ottawa, rushing in at the last moment. It was amazing how this music really made them wind down, and they knew it. The pianist was thoughtful and would tone things down or take his break when flight announcements were made. The other would suddenly burst into the middle of everything. People just stared. Passengers and staff are welcome to display their talents, but what has surprised everyone is how the traditional piano has improved interdepartmental relations. Pilots, mechanics, baggage-handlers with earmuffs swinging on their belts, and flight attendants all come and play; some bring sheet music. There was even a talent contest open to employees from right across Canada."

It seems that we still need human kindness, especially in the sterile frenzy of an airport. And in the frenzy of our lives, we still need music, live music. Will a Steinway always be the "Instrument of the Immortals" as tradition suggests, or will an outsider crack open the family secret and set free its magical sound for all to call their own? ❦

The Horowitz Steinway will be in Toronto in February 1992.

Nightlife off the Beaten Path

How did the changing environment affect the evolution of the rare mammals of the Yucatán Peninsula?

By Mark D. Engstrom

THINK OF THE YUCATÁN Peninsula at night and what comes to mind is bustling streets, hotels, shops, the cafes of Cancún, and the evening light shows at the ruins of Chichén Itzá and Uxmál. But the nightlife that abounds on the peninsula also has an intriguing natural side. Off the beaten track in the forest one can explore the nocturnal world of the little-known Yucatán mammals.

Robert Dowler of Angelo State University, Texas, and I have travelled to the forest to gather data for a study of these mammals. Readers of *Rotunda* are familiar with the region through the renowned work on Maya prehistory

Mark Engstrom is associate curator in charge of the Department of Mammalogy, Royal Ontario Museum

The big-eared climbing rat is common throughout the Yucatán Peninsula. This sensitive rodent is an adept climber and feeds mainly on fruits.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBERT DOWLER

in Belize by David Pendergast of the ROM's Department of New World Archaeology. In addition to its archaeological importance, the peninsula is of considerable biological interest because of its unique composition of flora and fauna. In particular, the community of mammals is unusual because it consists of a number of species and geographic races (biologically distinct, geographic subunits of species) endemic (peculiar) to the region. By studying the evolutionary history of the endemic mammals, we hope to determine how past geological, climatic, and biological events have interacted to mould the peninsular fauna.

On a first visit, the Yucatán Peninsula might appear to be an unbroken expanse of beach on the coasts, and brush and forests in the interior; however, it actually comprises a mosaic of land forms and types of vegetation. The peninsula is a broad, flat limestone plain projecting north from northwest Central America into the Gulf of México. Surrounded on three sides by the gulf and the Caribbean Sea, the peninsula is connected to Central America to the south along a fault zone that passes through northern Belize and Guatemala and then proceeds to the Gulf Coast in southern Campeche, México. Politically, the region encompasses the Mexican states of Campeche, Yucatán, Quintana Roo, and eastern Tabasco, the northern half of the district of El Petén, Guatemala, and the northern half of Belize.

The limestone bedrock that forms the peninsula is covered by a relatively thin layer of soil and is pockmarked with numerous caves, caverns, and sinkholes (*cenotes*), providing abundant roosting sites for bats. Most of the northern two-thirds of the peninsula is drained by underground waterways, and major rivers are present only in the south. The coastline is dotted with numerous cayos and islands, some of which contain unique mammals.

Yucatán's climate is hot and tropical with wet and dry seasons roughly corresponding to our summers and winters. Annual rainfall increases five-fold from the arid northern coast to the wet southern reaches of the peninsula in northern Guatemala. Vegetation is strongly influenced by rainfall and ranges from dry thorn-brush on the northern coast to deciduous forest in the centre, to lush mixed deciduous and evergreen forest in the east and south.

Geology, climate, and vegetation combine to support a wide variety of tropical animals. Although the peninsula is less than a quarter the size of Ontario, it contains about 10 per cent more species of mammals, including approximately 115 species of land mammals, about half of which are bats. Many of the species and geographic races endemic to the peninsula are small—mostly rodents, opossums, and shrews. Yet despite its diversity, high degree of endemism, and interest to conservationists and ecotourists, the mammalian fauna of the peninsula is poorly known compared with other areas in Central America and México.

Although sometimes I'm accused of creating excuses to leave Toronto in the dead of winter, Bob Dowler and I work in the wet, mixed forest of southern Campeche during the dry season in January because it is the only time of year when the logging "roads" in this area are remotely passable. Camps off the beaten path often present a few impediments to fieldwork.

In the process of driving eight hours along the 44-kilometre stretch to our field site, we knocked out the 10 years of rust that was holding our truck together, and water now splashes us and our equipment through the floorboards. While manoeuvring around and through metre-deep ruts, mud wallows, and fallen trees, we also broke the kingpin in the front end, tore the spare tire and its frame from under the truck, twisted the emergency brake cable, and smashed the windshield on a swinging vine. Each place seems to have its own set of small hazards: hordes of blinding, night-flying insects in the extensive cattail marshes of southwestern Campeche; the dizzying effects of heat prostration in dry forests in the centre of the peninsula; biting flies and cyclones on the beaches of western Campeche; voracious mosquitoes near mangrove swamps on the coasts; and omnipresent tourists on Cozumel Island.

The Yucatán Peninsula, which is less than a quarter the size of Ontario, supports about 10 per cent more species of mammals. Unprecedented steps are being taken to protect these animals

At our current campsite we are confronted with the difficulty of working for extended periods in remote areas where there is almost no surface water. The heat notwithstanding, our drinking water is limited to one litre per day, plus a bottle of pop or juice, and there is no water for bathing. After 10 days our hair goes stiff with grease and dirt.

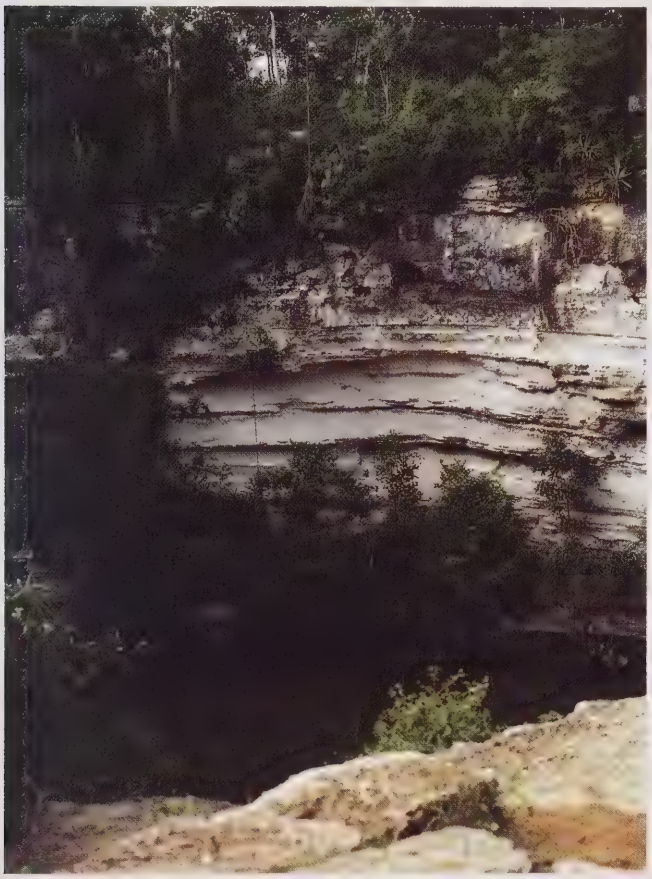
Minor inconveniences aside, in the evening we are rewarded by witnessing some of the variety of animals that occupy the peninsula. At dusk, an agouti (a large rodent that looks somewhat like a blunt-headed rabbit on stilts) emerges from the bush and warily walks past us as tinamous whistle in the forest. Howler monkeys continue to call as we catch sight of a kinkajou that has been barking at us from a tree above the camp.

In our nets we find numerous species of spectacular insect, fruit, and nectar-feeding bats, as well as an unusual vampire, a frog-eating bat, a carnivorous bat, and even a bird, a bat falcon. Two species of squirrels forage and run through the trees in the morning, as a tiny grey fox stands silently observing us from down the road.

While checking our small live-traps, we notice fruit-eating bats roosting for the day in palm-leaf tents that

they make by cutting the leaves across the veins, which then collapse to form a shelter. Among the 14 species of rats, mice, pocket gophers, shrews, and opossums in our live-traps are three species and seven additional geographic races restricted to the peninsula, including the Yucatán deer mouse, Gaumer's spiny pocket mouse (named for its voluminous external cheek pouches or pockets in which it collects large quantities of seeds), and the tree-dwelling golden Yucatán vesper rat.

Late one afternoon we encounter a group of illegal



The limestone bedrock of the Yucatán Peninsula is pockmarked with numerous sinkholes or *cenotes* like this one at the ruin site of Chichén Itzá. *Cenotes* serve as sources of water for local residents and as roosting sites for numerous species of bats.

trophy hunters returning from an area near the border with Petén, Guatemala, where they had killed two jaguars. Trophy hunting and the market for the hides of these and other protected cats are harmful because they selectively eliminate these conspicuous predators from ever-decreasing patches of suitable forest.

There are several ways to document the distribution of species on the peninsula, from the taking of field notes of sightings in camp to photographing medium- to large-sized mammals with remote, infrared cameras; making photographic records of road kills; and collecting selected specimens of smaller animals. Museum collections are the primary basis for research on evolutionary patterns within and among species and on the historical development of the fauna as a whole. Our investigations of the evolutionary history of peninsular mammals are centred on morphological (physical form and structure) and genetic comparison of endemic species and geographic races with related animals found elsewhere in Latin America. Morphological variation is analyzed by comparisons with museum specimens, while genetic variation is analyzed by the reconstruction of historical genealogies among species through the use of proteins, DNA, and whole chromosomes.

Today's fauna should reflect the historical changes in climate, vegetation, and geology of the Yucatán Peninsula as well as the ever-changing connections between this region and other regions of endemism in Central America and México. For example, several mammals endemic to peninsular lowland forests, such as the Yucatán deer mouse, Yucatán black-eared rice rat, and tiny Yucatán yellow bat, appear, from the lack of evidence of any substantial genetic change, to be of relatively recent origin. Their nearest relatives reside in adjacent areas of Central America and eastern México. Evolutionary divergence of these groups probably occurred sometime during the Pleistocene Epoch (1.5 million to 10,000 years ago), perhaps as a result of the contraction and isolation of suitable forests on the peninsula and nearby areas during dry, glacial periods. Other species isolated in dry forests in the northern part of the peninsula, such as the greyish mouse opossum, appear to be recently derived from close relatives in western México, suggesting a connection between similar dry forests of those areas sometime in the not distant past. Gaumer's spiny pocket mouse and the Yucatán vesper rat are distantly related genetically to other groups, and their origin might date back to the early stages of geological uplifting of the peninsula five to 15 million years ago. The geographic relationships of these species are obscure, although their nearest living relatives occur in Central America and eastern México.

Early results of our study indicate, therefore, that the current mammalian community of the Yucatán Peninsula is composite and consists of species derived from different areas at different times. Many of the endemic species and geographic races have differentiated on the peninsula relatively recently and are derived from formerly continuous populations shared with either adjacent areas of Central America or with western México. Others are remnants of an older fauna that dates back nearly to the geological origin of the peninsula, and their geographic affinities appear to be with northern Central America.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARK ENGSTROM

The Geographic Relationships of Yucatán Mammals

Mammals of the Yucatán Peninsula include species derived through connections with different areas at different times. Some species are recently derived and closely related to species in adjacent areas of Central America and eastern México. Others have their nearest relatives in western México. Still others are relatively distantly related to other species in the region and their geographic affinities are unclear.

The greyish mouse opposum has its nearest relatives in the dry forests of western México.

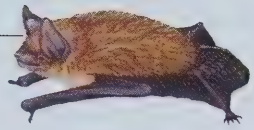
GREYISH MOUSE OPPOSUM

Gaumer's spiny pocket mouse and the Yucatán vesper rat are relatively distantly related to other species in the region and their geographic affinities are unclear: their origins might date to the geological uplifting of the peninsula five to 15 million years ago.

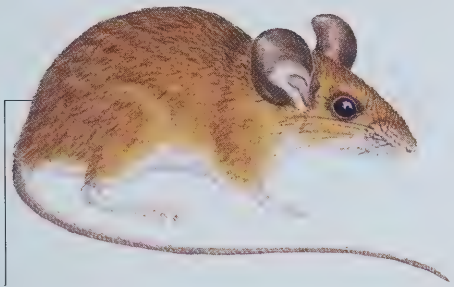
GAUMER'S SPINY POCKET MOUSE

YUCATÁN VESPER RAT

YUCATÁN YELLOW BAT



YUCATÁN BLACK-EARED RICE RAT



YUCATÁN DEER MOUSE

Some species such as the Yucatán yellow bat, the Yucatán black-eared rice rat, and the Yucatán deer mouse are recently derived and closely related to species in adjacent areas of Central America and eastern México.

In spite of the wide variety of mammals that the "peninsula supports," the diversity of species is actually small when compared to some other areas of Central America. The low number may be the result of the "peninsula effect," that is, a lessening of the number of species towards the end of peninsulas caused by the limited access for new migrants. In this case they can enter only from the south. Although diversity does decrease from south to north on the Yucatán, there are also fewer species of animals in the west than the east. Diversity is low across the peninsula as a whole. The low number of species is related more likely to the constant topography, the uniform climate, and the long history of natural and human disruptions, which accelerate rates of extinction.

One normally pictures a tropical environment as one of unchanging primeval forests only recently disturbed by humans. In Central America this is a simplistic view. During the Pleistocene, the climatic conditions that produced the massive glaciers that covered much of Canada and the northern United States also greatly affected tropical environments. While Toronto lay under the Wisconsin ice sheet 18 to 12,000 years ago, there was a corresponding cool dry period in Central America. At this time the peninsula probably was covered by vegetation tolerant of these conditions, such as pine-savannah, dry thorn-scrub forest, and deciduous forest. The warmer and wetter climate began only about 11,000 years ago when the glaciers were retreating north. Thus the quasi-rainforest now on the southern and eastern two-thirds of the peninsula is probably less than 11,000 years old. Until the late Pleistocene the northern third of the peninsula was flooded, so that it was uninhabitable for mammals.

The Yucatán region also supported the Maya civilization, which had a profound and lasting effect on the environment. The oldest known settlements date back 4000 years. From approximately 1000 B.C. to A.D. 900 (from the Middle and Late Pre-Classic to Late Classic periods) the Maya populations increased dramatically. By the end of the Late Classic the peninsula was densely occupied; population estimates range from as low as three to as high as 14 million. At the height of the Classic period much of the peninsula was under intense cultivation and the agricultural development of the Petén probably created a mix of forest and pasture lands like that of present-day Ohio. Urban populations declined at the end of the Classic, followed by a shift to rural communities, where substantial populations persisted in the south until the arrival of the Spanish in 1517. Soon thereafter, native populations were decimated through the spread of European diseases. The wet forest rapidly regenerated as the human population declined. Therefore the extensive continuous forests that exist today in the south are less than 400 years old.

Maya still make up the greatest part of the growing rural population of the peninsula. Most of the three to 3.5 million people in the region live in the north; fewer than

ILLUSTRATIONS BY FIONA REID/MAP BY RODNEY FROST

one million live in the south. Forests are cleared by traditional slash-and-burn methods in order to free land for the planting of corn and other crops and for urban development. Intensive logging takes place in the south. Subsistence hunting is common throughout the peninsula, selectively removing medium to large mammals; big-game hunting for cats, tapirs, and deer takes place in the south. As human populations grow and the forest is cleared at an ever-increasing rate, large mammals and those medium to small mammals adapted to undisturbed forest are at risk. Besides being inherently undesirable, the elimination of species erases passages of earth history that are etched in the genealogies of the animals. Extinction eliminates clues to the biological past as surely as the looting of Maya archaeological artifacts erases traces of human history.

A forest near Loltún, Yucatán, is cleared through slash-and-burn methods. Increased rates of deforestation through traditional agriculture, logging, and urban developments displace mammals adapted to undisturbed forest.

Fortunately we have several reasons to be cautiously optimistic about the future of the peninsular fauna. Even though the human population is again growing exponentially, the region has a lower population density than other parts of Central America. Much of the forest in south-central México and El Petén, Guatemala, is intact. Species that live throughout the peninsula, including endemics, have survived previous periods of intense agricultural use and natural disturbance; they are resilient in the face of environmental changes.

Most important, the governments of México, Guatemala, and Belize have recognized the urgent need for conservation in the region and have taken unprecedented cooperative steps to preserve continuous tracts of forest. The Calakmul and Sian Ka'an biosphere reserves were recently created in southern and eastern portions of the peninsula in México; the Maya Biosphere Reserve encompassing virtually all of the northern half of El Petén was established in Guatemala; and the Rio Bravo Conservation Area was set aside in northwestern Belize. In fact the Calakmul and Maya biosphere reserves and the Rio Bravo Conservation Area comprise one of the largest continuous tracts of relatively undisturbed forest remaining in Central America. If adequate funding is received for the reserves and conservation areas, then the unique mammalian fauna of the Yucatán Peninsula has a good chance of surviving virtually intact. We hope that results of our study will provide useful information for the conservation of the mammals.

The underlying causes for the demise of the Classic Maya civilization have been the subject of intense speculation. Deforestation, subsequent erosion of shallow soils, and concomitant depletion of natural resources were probably among the factors that contributed to the decline of this agriculturally based society. Perhaps we will learn a lesson from history and, through prudent conservation of the remaining wilderness areas of the peninsula, manage this natural resource to the benefit of the entire mammalian community, including humans. ❦

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBERT DOWLER

"This must be the place."
Crown Royal

A painting of Mount Rundle by Catharine Robb Whyte is one of many images of the Rockies in the collection of the Whyte Museum.

The Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies

THE BROCHURE FOR THE WHYTE Museum of the Canadian Rockies invites the visitor to "celebrate the continuing tradition of mountain people." What, wondered this effete Eastern traveller, are mountain people? After a few hours in the Banff museum, I had a very good idea: they are Boston debutantes turned painters, Stoney Indians, intrepidly elegant female alpinists and courteous Japanese ones, Australian packers and Swiss guides, entrepreneurial outfitters and photographers, Princeton-educated sportsmen—all with a streak of independence or artistry, or both. In today's Banff, with its mock-Tyrolean or postmodern shopping arcades, the community these oddly assorted mavericks forged is just about invisible. But the Whyte Museum brings it so graphically to life that even the modern resort town looks more intriguing after a visit to the premises at 111 Bear Street.

The Whyte Museum is, as Banffites would say, the museum that Catharine and Peter built. And the Whytes' marriage, like much in mountain culture, melded untrammelled nature with the refinements of civilization. Peter Whyte was born in Banff in 1905, the son of a grocer and dry goods merchant. (Lift your eyes to the top of the storefront at 103 Banff Avenue and you can still see the sign advertising the family business.) Tiny turn-of-the-century Banff attracted enough resident and visiting artists to make the idea of becoming a painter seem perfectly natural to the boy, and in the late 1920s he went to Boston to study art. His fellow student, Catharine Robb, hailed from the sort of patrician New England family where one sailed with the Rockefellers, collected Japanese *objets d'art*, and perfected one's talents while never neglecting one's duties. The Brahmin princess and the mountain boy fell in love. They married in 1930, built a log cabin-cum-studio in Banff, and began a life that centred around skiing, hiking, travelling (mostly in other mountainous countries) and painting.

In the 1950s the Whytes began planning a museum and archives devoted to the culture of the Rocky Mountains. It started with modest hopes of preserving their own log house and collecting documents and artifacts "before all the old people with collections of Indian Bead Work, etc. die off," as Catharine Whyte put it. In 1968, eighteen

PHOTO COURTESY THE WHYTE MUSEUM OF THE CANADIAN ROCKIES

months after Peter Whyte died, the contemporary building that houses the main museum opened on the banks of the Bow River west of Banff Avenue. (Catharine Whyte died in 1979.) Today, in addition to the main museum's extensive collections, the Whytes' dream of exhibiting their own "pleasant way of living in these times" has been fulfilled: their furnished house, as well as that of their friends, the Moores, and four smaller cabins stand on the museum grounds.

What makes this small museum unique is that it manages—quickly and economically—to sketch the men and women who fell under the spell of the vast, impersonal Rocky Mountains. Thanks to the Whytes' largesse, the museum's storytelling tools—its artifacts—are many and eloquent. They range from the Whytes' own vividly illustrative paintings of Stoney Indians and mountain types to stylish CPR posters of mountain holidays to the silk rope used by a group of Japanese climbers on the first ascent of Mount Alberta, in 1925. (Accompanying the silken coil is the equally poignant thank-you letter sent by their leader, Yuko Maki, to their guides: "We came from Japan so far, called by this charming great mountain.")

But the Whyte Museum tells the mountain people's stories most memorably with a knowing mixture of photographs and anecdotes. From the very beginnings of settlement in the Rockies, when the CPR made them accessible in the 1880s, the mountains have attracted and trained superb photographers. Some, like the Montreal firm William Notman and Son, visited briefly for professional reasons: others, like the Quaker Vaux family from Philadelphia, made richly documented scientific excursions over four decades. Pride of place at the Whyte Museum goes to Byron Harmon, a native of Tacoma, Washington, who set up shop in Banff in 1903 and vowed to photograph every peak in the Rockies. In the end, Harmon photographed the moun-

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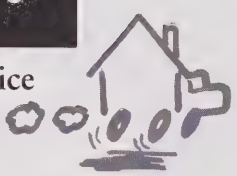

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tains, to be sure, and much more: a vulnerable string of climbers dwarfed by Mount Huber, climbers staring down a crevasse, composed and smiling Stoney Indians in plaid dresses and studded belts, composed and unsmiling Swiss guides with pipes, picks, and ropes. Luckily for us, the man was incorrigibly enterprising: his hundreds of compositions are always interesting and often unforgettable. One of the Whyte Museum's most pleasant ways of showcasing its photographs is with a series of scrapbooks in a small lounge area on the museum's first floor. Visitors can pull up a chair, choose a scrapbook, and pore over subjects such as "Winter Activities," "Bears' Bait," "Catharine and Pete," "Log Structures," or "Hollywood North."

The Whyte is full of social history, by no means all of it concerned with male packers, guides, and climbers. An inadvertently humorous cigarette advertisement from the 1930s shows the celebrated climber Georgia Engelhard (described by her guide as "part mountain goat") during a tough climb recommending Camels for their "energizing effect." Mountain climbers, as a museum caption points out, were as a class liberal, educated, and affluent, which accounts for the early presence of women climbers. Alongside photographs of wasp-waisted ladies in long skirts being escorted over crevasses by Swiss guides, museumgoers may read the story of the woman who climbed Mount Saint Donald on her honeymoon. The night before the climb, the other ladies in the hotel consulted and decided that the bride could climb, with perfect propriety, in her husband's best knickers.

After the photographs, the museum's most telling "artifacts" are its largest ones—the two log houses and the four small cabins. The cabins belonged at various stages to packers, guides, wardens, and mountain handymen. The log houses, furnished just as they were when

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occupied by two of Banff's First Families, are packed to the rafters with art, Indian artifacts, the spoils of world travels, and, in the case of the Moores, a surprising amount of grandiose furniture from Philip Moore's family home in Boston.

Philip Moore was a Princeton man who signed up for a wilderness trip in the mountains in 1902, decided to invest in the business himself, and married his partner's kid sister, a formidable tomboy named Pearl Brewster, perhaps the second or third child born in Banff. Pearl Brewster rode, shot, and played very competitive hockey into her forties. Their log house is a curiously satisfying mixture of mahogany and silver, Indian costumes, stuffed animal heads, and paintings by the German-American wildlife painter Carl Rungius (he gave one to Pearl each year on her birthday). The Whytes' house is more informal but equally illustrative of a thoroughly civilized life rooted in the mountains.

For museums devoted to a place, the proof of the pudding lies in your changed perception of that place. You can enter the Whyte Museum feeling that Banff, with its mineral shops, fudge emporia, and Indian souvenirs, might be a mountain resort almost anywhere in North America. When you leave and walk out on Banff Avenue, you know otherwise. Underneath the touristic trappings, there are traces of the real Banff—in Harmony's Drug Store, which is the descendant of Byron Harmon's shop, in the ubiquitous Brewster buses founded by Pearl Brewster Moore's family, in the Anglican Church on Beaver Street where the Moores married, in the local cemetery where Whytes, Harmons, Brewsters, and Moores are laid to rest. And even across the great, never-to-be-inhabited Rockies, on a fanciful day you can glimpse the shades of lady alpinists, artists, and mountain-mad eccentrics.

KATHERINE ASHENBURG
Katherine Ashenburg is art and books editor of The Globe and Mail

Further Reading/ Additional Information

Further Reading
(compiled with the assistance of the authors and the Library of the Royal Ontario Museum)

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• The Fragrance of Kings
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Li, H. L., *The Garden Flowers of China*, The Ronald Press (1959).

• Instrument of the Immortals
Ratcliffe, Ronald V., *Steinway*, Raincoast Books (1989).

• Nightlife off the Beaten Path
For additional information on conservation efforts in the Yucatán region please contact:
Conservation International —Canada, 174 Spadina Avenue, Suite 508, Toronto, Ontario, M5T 2C2.
World Wildlife Fund Canada, 90 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 504, Toronto, Ontario, M4P 2Z7.
Nature Conservancy, Latin American Division, 1815 North Lynn Street, Arlington, Virginia, 22209.

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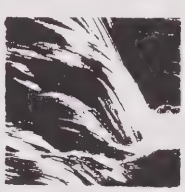

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A PROGRAM OF THE MEMBERS' VOLUNTEER COMMITTEE

Cemeteries, Canada's First Jewish M.P., Extraterrestrials and More

THIS IS A TEST. IF YOU FIND THE VERY idea of David Charles Sloane's book ***The Last Great Necessity: Cemeteries in American History*** (Johns Hopkins University Press, US $39.95) a little too morbid, then you are unwittingly proof of the author's thesis. His thesis is simply that Western society has steadily abandoned the "mysterious relationship with the grave." This change, though it has become blatant only in comparatively recent times, was anything but abrupt. Sloane's book, though poorly organized and somewhat repetitious, is never less than fascinating as it charts the decay of one parcel of ideas, followed by its replacement with another.

Prior to our own age, people in the European tradition, and the people from whom the tradition derives, buried their dead in order to acknowledge their lives and honour their death. The potter's field (Matthew 27:7) and the family crypt of the nobility had this in common: it was assumed that, in both, eventually one set of remains would be pushed aside and another put in its place (which in no way diminished respect). This was the essential characteristic of what were known as *ossuaries*, which we more commonly call charnel houses. The idea was strongest in Roman Catholic countries, but it was only slightly less powerful in Protestant England and wherever the Anglican communion spread. A telling example on the North American continent is the small plot of land at the corner of Broadway and Wall Street in New York on which successive versions of Trinity Church have stood. Over the centuries an estimated 100,000 bodies were buried there, one generation on top of the last. As a result, the site has gained fully a metre in elevation.

In Trinity's heyday, the late eighteenth century, there was a movement towards building over churchyards or graveyards (there was a clear distinction between the two terms) and opening new ones beyond the rim of the growing communities. But often the old sites were merely closed up as the town or city enveloped them. The result was almost always a kind of death park, rich in charm and eventually in history too, stuck in the middle of the metropolis. Sloane's book is concerned only with the United States, but it's easy to think of such Canadian examples as the Old Burying Ground at St. Paul's in Halifax, the Loyalist Burying Ground in Fredericton, and St. Michael's cemetery in Toronto.

The old system started to break down with the opening, in 1831, of Mount Auburn outside Cambridge, Massachusetts, which was intended to be a botanical garden and a sort of museum as well as a place of burial. Emerson praised it. So, a little later, did Emily Dickinson, who said, "It seems as if Nature has formed the spot with a distinct idea of its being a resting place for her children." Her comment suggests a picture of social strolling amongst the tombstones, and that image is not misplaced. A new name was needed for this new phenomenon: "cemetery," from the Greek for sleeping chamber. The word had a Christian connotation, implying

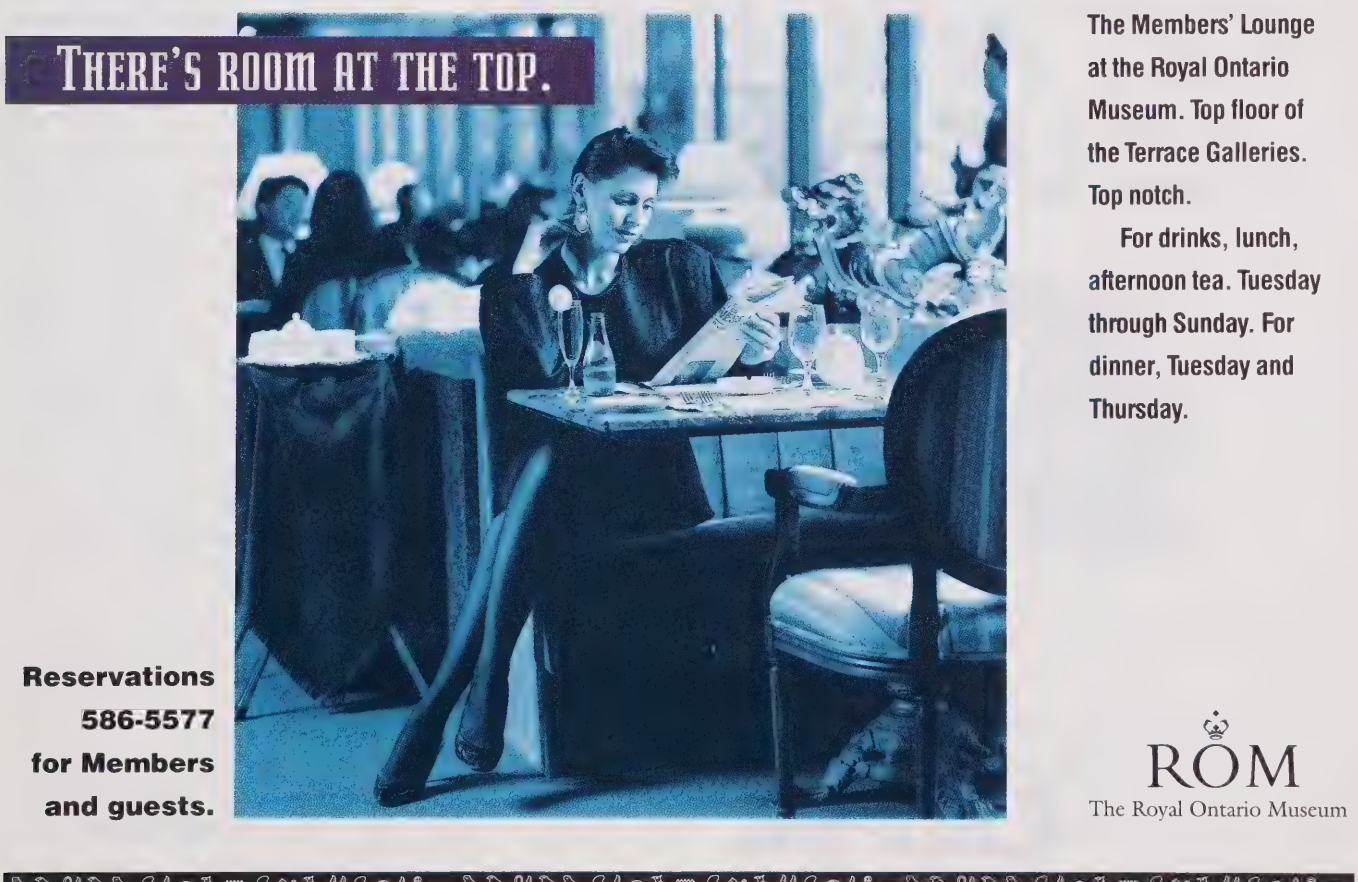
that the body was just sleeping until it would be awakened on Judgment Day. But it was a gentler interpretation than most, devoid of any suggestion of fire and brimstone, and it quickly gained universal acceptance.

By the middle of the century, however, the new "rural cemeteries," which might be church- or government-operated, were fighting for their existence against the "garden park cemeteries" run by land managers and foremen acting on behalf of real estate developers. The first one was in Cincinnati, Ohio; soon they were everywhere. Their distinguishing characteristic was the use of professional landscape artists (Frederick Law Olmsted, the designer of Central Park in New York, was influenced by such people—and they by him). Another factor was the way one cemetery might cater to any number of religious, ethnic, racial, or fraternal groups, albeit sometimes in separate sections. But this and all other big changes in burial customs naturally reflect changing attitudes towards death itself, for by the late nineteenth century science was beginning to triumph over religion and people were growing less comfortable with elemental reminders of their own mortality. Certainly they were becoming less tribal about the whole business.

The ultimate indication of this was the next stage in the evolution of the cemetery, the so-called memorial park. The first one was Forest Lawn in California, satirized so brilliantly by Evelyn Waugh and still beloved by connoisseurs of kitsch everywhere. The marketing idea at the back of memorial parks was to stress the notion of a community of the dead, stratified according to their achievement and celebrity in life, with perhaps a generous bit of patriotism thrown in. The sense of the grave as an essentially temporary home for the remains pending their return to the earth was effectively kept at bay. Now, with the increasing popularity (and inevitability) of cremation, the emphasis shifts still further.

The Last Great Necessity gives far more detail than can even be hinted at here, including discussion of cemeteries in terms of urban design. It makes you wonder that more hasn't been written on the subject.

ANOTHER NEW BOOK IT WOULD BE all too easy, and all too sad, to overlook is ***Burn This Gossip*** by Sheldon and Judith Godfrey, a very short and, in its way, almost perfect biography of a figure in Canadian history who deserves to be better known. The title is a quotation from a letter John A. Macdonald wrote to the person in question: George Benjamin (1799-1864), founder of the *Belleville Intelligencer* and Canada's first Jewish Member of Parliament. Actually, those distinctions don't begin to sketch his significance. Long before Jews were accepted in political life in Britain, Benjamin, from a family of printers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and publishers in Brighton, England, emigrated to Upper Canada, hoping that it would combine, in the Godfreys' words, "the best of the traditions of loyalty and attachment to the British crown with the freedom and individual liberty of the American frontier."

Benjamin was a thoroughgoing Tory and made a number of enemies, including Susanna Moodie, some of whom lashed out at him with chilling anti-Semitism. He was vulnerable to attack, the Godfreys state, because he was "trying to blend in as quickly as possible, to gain acceptance and achieve equality in a new land, while secretly maintaining his own links with his religion." It was difficult for him to defend, for example, the incongruity of his membership to both a Montreal synagogue and the Orange Order.

He was a tireless public servant in posts large and small, local and otherwise, but the Tories did not follow custom and reward him for his efforts when retirement drew near. Ultimately, in 1862, John Sanfield Macdonald, the Reform/Liberal leader, asked him to be the Province of Canada's finance minister. He declined, said his son, because "he would not leave his party even after they had broken their promises." He added: "Poor father preferred to go to his grave poor and without a stain on his name than with riches and have it said he was a traitor." More than a century would pass before another Jew was offered cabinet rank in Canada—Herb Gray, in the Trudeau government, in 1969. *Burn This Gossip* is $29.99 from the Duke & George Press, PO Box 1, 260 Adelaide Street East, Toronto M5A 1N0.

A FEW OTHER RECENT BOOKS OF particular interest to *Rotunda* readers:

• ***The Cosmic Water Hole*** by Emmanuel Davoust (MIT Press, US $19.95) is a rare thing indeed: a discussion about the possibility of

extraterrestrial life by a scientist in the field who has no axe to grind. The author is an astronomer at the Observatoire Midi-Pyrenées in Toulouse, but the French-to-English translation process has not robbed his work of clarity or subtlety. He tries to bring the new advances in such fields as prebiotic chemistry to bear on the question and to run down the various attempts now underway to find out whether we're all just a fluke.

• ***Biosphere 2: The Human Experiment*** by John Allen (Penguin, $29.95) is a text-and-photograph record of a major $35-million experiment that is still underway in the desert outside Tucson, Arizona. Eight people are spending two years mostly underground in an artificial but complete environment, living on recycled air and water and whatever they can catch or grow. The results could provide information useful in the study of a number of ecological disciplines, to say nothing of its implications for space colonization.

• ***High Endeavours: The Extraordinary Life and Adventures of Miles and Beryl Smeeton*** (Prairie Books, $29.95) by a British journalist, Miles Clark, is the dual biography of a husband-and-wife team of English adventurers and yachtspeople who have more than one important connection to Canada. After the Second World War, they homesteaded on Saltspring Island in British Columbia and later, in the 1970s, spent their last years breeding endangered animals in the Alberta foothills. During the times before and in between, they travelled the remote parts of the world by land and sea, singly and together. As a young woman, for example, Beryl Smeeton walked across China and Tibet. It's quite a yarn actually—well worth the effort of seeking it out.

DOUGLAS FETHERLING
Douglas Fetherling is literary editor of the Kingston Whig-Standard

In the February issue of *Rotunda*...

Tourmaline: The Other Gem

By John Kenny

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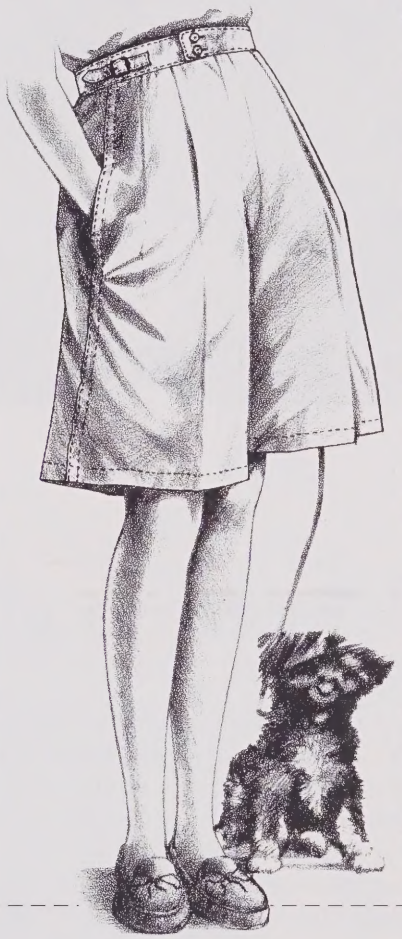

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY KEVIN KELLY

Face to Face

Where can you see this face? You are wrong if you guessed that it is located on one of the fourteenth- or fifteenth-century Romanesque buildings of Europe. In fact the face is situated barely above eye level at the main entrance to Toronto's old city hall. Stephen Otto and William Dendy, who have both written about Toronto architecture, believe that the face is an adaptation of a European Romanesque architectural sculpture. Others contend that the face and others adjacent are caricatures of the city fathers who governed in the late-nineteenth century. The next time you visit city hall, look again.

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